Open outlook,  
open attitude,  
open science

Improving the world sustainably together  
Version 27 October

(with adapted texts in yellow compared to the version of 5 October)

2020-2025 Strategic Plan
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Approved by the University Council, UU Strategic Plan, university section
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Preface

<To follow...>

Executive Board and the deans

Note to reader: In this Strategic Plan, we use the term 'multidisciplinary'. Multidisciplinarity is the basis from which we realise various forms of cooperation, both between employees working in different disciplines and between the university and society. These connections may also be interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary in nature.
1. **Utrecht University is working to create a better world.**

Utrecht University is a broad, Dutch and international university. Leading research feeds our innovative education. The university has strong ties to the surrounding environment, and with the city and region of Utrecht in particular. The roots of our University extend deep into the past.

We form a close-knit community and we value connection. Public values such as equality, diversity, inclusiveness, openness, accessibility and mutual respect form the starting point of our strategy and activities. Involved students, employees and alumni carry our principles forward.

The teaching at Utrecht University is modern, personal, high quality and continuously in development. Here with us, students find a challenging study climate that is aligned to their ambitions and talents. Our students are inquisitive, creative, critical and enterprising. We pay special attention to our lecturers and to encouraging and facilitating educational innovation within an environment that is increasingly inclusive and international.

A large number of UU research groups are among the best in the world in their respective fields. Multidisciplinary research at Utrecht University focuses on four themes: Dynamics of Youth, Institutions for Open Societies, Life Sciences and Pathways to Sustainability. Utrecht University participates in regional, national and international consortia that conduct thematic and topical research into societal themes.

We recognise that complex issues cannot be resolved based on a single perspective. We firmly believe that a multidisciplinary and scientific approach is the key to new insights and solutions. Together, we will improve the world in sustainable fashion.

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**Mission and vision**

Utrecht University is working to create a better world.

Our graduates have the knowledge and skills to make a substantial contribution to society. Our research is ground-breaking and focused on resolving major international issues. Our collaborative culture makes innovation, new insights and social impact possible. The core values of ambition, inspiration, commitment and independence form the basis of our university community.
2. Challenges in the world around us

Utrecht University holds a place in the heart of society. Developments in the world around us play a role in determining our strategy.

Social issues

Current social issues are complex and not limited to specific generations or continents, nor can they be resolved from a single perspective. Climate change, for instance, is prompting consideration of urgent social issues including the energy transition, how we structure our environment and circularity. The gap in society, between rich and poor and between people with high and low levels of education, is widening. On average, we live longer lives, which raises issues in relation to care, healthcare and health. All these challenges call for students, employees and alumni who seek our solutions and contribute to societal discourse. Fundamental research plays a crucial role in this regard.

These days, information – including scientific data – is readily available everywhere and at all times. Experts are not the only ones to form an opinion: thanks in part to new media, information has become accessible to everyone and the discussions have accelerated and intensified. Scientists must enter into an open interaction with many different parties in order to work together on solutions for social issues.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we have been able to see the interaction between science, policymakers and politicians on an almost daily basis. The transparent nature of science contributed positively to scientific findings, uncertainties and insights being fully taken into account, in addition to political and socio-economic considerations. It is precisely by forging connections with societal partners that we can demonstrate how academics cooperate with one another to develop and introduce their knowledge using transparent methods.

Trends in higher education

Globalisation and digitisation bring international knowledge and education to our doorstep. With the proverbial press of a button, our students have access to lectures from all corners of the globe. Digital technologies have yielded new opportunities in academic research. Scientists can share their data with colleagues at other universities by making it open access. The development and transfer of knowledge is no longer the sole province of knowledge institutions.

There is an increasing expectation that universities will conduct research that benefits society as a whole, especially in the case of publicly-funded institutions. International efforts are therefore under way to create an open model for knowledge sharing and collaboration. Parties in both the Netherlands and the European Union are investing heavily in open science, which aims to see that research results, regardless of the form of the scientific output, are made freely available to others at the earliest possible stage. Open science deals with research, education and how we communicate with one another and with society at large.

The primary focus of university education is shifting from the transfer of knowledge towards the active application of knowledge and the development of skills. Students – the professionals of tomorrow – are gaining experience with personal skills such as self-reflection and creativity during their degree programmes. To an increasing extent, they will no longer be able to finish their academic track without interruption and combine their studies with work or other activities. Alumni can see that knowledge and the labour market are changing at a rapid pace. In order to maintain their employability, professionals must be willing to accept responsibility for their own development and be able to continue that development throughout their lives. All these aspects call for custom solutions and other - flexible - teaching methods. Due to the increased pressure to succeed, in combination with factors such as the limited availability of student housing, more students are experiencing mental health issues. This development calls for active policy and a more individualised approach to student guidance and accommodations.

Education and research are increasingly shifting towards the private sector. Traditional curricula are undergoing changes, stemming not only from how the education is being provided but as a result of...
external developments as well. New parties, both public and private, are emerging to take responsibility for portions of the curricula and develop global study programmes for professionals.

Universities are becoming more dependent on technology companies for their teaching and research infrastructure. In order to preserve the academic quality of data in this new landscape, collaboration in areas such as infrastructure is needed; this collaboration with universities in the Netherlands and beyond must be conducted in keeping with public values.

The international mobility of students and staff has grown immensely in recent decades. Students from all over the world study in Utrecht and international staff are part of our university community. Their knowledge and cultural background enrich our education and research and their different perspectives add value to the academic debate. Due in part to the influx of international staff and students, our university community is becoming more diverse. An increasing range of cultural, religious and socio-economic backgrounds are represented. International collaboration is crucial to the quality of universities and is actively promoted by the European Union. Despite the public debate on the anglicisation of higher education, the number of degree programmes being taught in English at the Dutch universities has greatly expanded in previous years.

**Increased cooperation**

Viewed in an international context, Dutch universities perform quite well. The universities contribute strongly to the Netherlands’ position as a knowledge economy and its economy in general. This is resulting in a growing influx of Dutch and international students in academic education.

Investments in the system are needed, yet currently seem to be limited to science and technology and to come at the expense of funding for other fields of study. All disciplines, however, are indispensable to any society that wishes to progress: both technological development and cultural preservation, scientific discoveries as well as knowledge on behavioural change, and both fundamental and more applied research. A forward-looking society stands to benefit precisely from a multidisciplinary approach to societal challenges, which calls for investment in all disciplines.

In recent years, research funding in the Netherlands and the European Union has shifted from free and independent research to more demand-driven, affiliated research. In the case of affiliated research, companies or civic society organisations offer input to help determine the focus of the research. Immense competitive pressure exists in the research world as well, with only a small portion of applications being approved for funding. This competition contributes to an increased workload among researchers. The financial structure and increasing competition are having a detrimental effect on work pressure and the well-being of students and PhD candidates as well.

Universities and government bodies need one another in order to reduce the pressure in higher education and research and to maintain our global position as a knowledge economy. Greater cooperation and less unnecessary competition have been established as priority areas for the coming period on the Strategic Agenda of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. Mitigating competitive incentives will require that institutions – in mutual consultation with the VSNU and, for example, the LERU—choose aspects with which to differentiate themselves while also identifying those areas in which they wish to cooperate.
3. The principles that guide our strategy

In this Strategic Plan, Utrecht University sets out its course for the coming years. With our position and mission as a firm foundation, and taking environmental factors and challenges into account, we have formulated our strategy via five guiding principles:

1. **collaboration across borders**: an international university with multidisciplinary education and research;

2. a **future-proof teaching culture** that focuses on quality and innovation;

3. a **close-knit community** of involved students, employees and alumni, in which there is mutual care and concern as well as space for development, connecting with one another, knowledge sharing and an open dialogue;

4. a **focus on sustainable development**: the Sustainable Development Goals will form an integral part of education, research, and operational management;

5. the **transition to open science**, in which we will prioritise both broader recognition and appreciation of our employees and the impact of education and research.

We will expound on these five guiding principles below. The specific implications for the organisation, the education and research and the faculties will be set out in subsequent chapters.

**Cross-border collaboration**

As a society, we are facing large-scale and complex challenges. Answers to these challenges can only be found by bringing together different perspectives and through intensive cooperation that transcends the boundaries of different disciplines. To that end, we have invested in four major multidisciplinary strategic research themes: Dynamics of Youth, Institutions for Open Societies, Life Sciences and Pathways to Sustainability. Excellent disciplinary research provides the basis for these four strategic themes. In coming years, thanks to the bond between research and teaching, the chosen profile will become more evident in our education. Based on the themes, our researchers will naturally collaborate with partners in government, the business community and civic society organisations.

Collaboration across borders is also the principle underlying the alliance we have entered into with the Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research and University Medical Center Utrecht. By taking advantage of the complementary strengths of our four institutions, we intend to strengthen and innovate teaching and research through concrete projects in the coming period as well. For students, numerous options for charting a broad personal development pathway are emerging.

We are an international university. An international environment promotes a stimulating academic and intellectual climate, an open attitude among staff and students and the expansion of scientific knowledge; it also improves students’ qualifications for a globalising job market. In the years ahead, Utrecht University intends to once again take great strides in the area of internationalisation: within Europe and worldwide we want to make more effective use of our international networks and partnerships. We are working towards a ‘warm welcome’ and the proper embedding of our international students and employees.

**Future-proof educational culture**

Cross-discipline mobility is a key pillar of our teaching model. We offer our students freedom of choice so that they can, on the one hand, develop a broad knowledge base and on the other, effectively
prepare themselves for the job market, where there is a demand for professionals who possess both specialised knowledge and a broad skill set. The University will take additional steps to promote students' mobility between disciplines, faculties and collaborative partners.

We have a reputation to uphold with regard to educational innovation and the professionalisation of lecturers. In recent years, our efforts have included the introduction of blended learning via the Educate-it programme. By establishing the Centre for Academic Teaching, we have brought together all initiatives in the areas of sharing knowledge and lecturer professionalisation. Utrecht University has a long tradition of placing value on education. In the coming period, explicit attention will similarly be devoted to the importance of education in the evaluation and development of academics.

Because knowledge is increasing and changing so rapidly, alumni will need to pursue continuous professional development after graduation. Together with stakeholders, Utrecht University is investing heavily in the development of a flexible curriculum for professionals in different phases of their life and career.

Close-knit community

Utrecht University strives to be a good employer with care and concern for all our people. We want to be a university where students and employees feel at home and for which alumni cherish warm feelings. We are a tight-knit university community: people share a sense of involvement with one another and there is space for development, connecting with one another, knowledge sharing and an open dialogue. We feel it is vital that the University is accessible and inclusive, that students and employees are considerate of one another and feel they are part of a community in which interest groups, cultural communities and social, study and sports-related associations are mutually complementary.

While the well-being of students and employees is of vital importance, we have seen an increase in workload in recent years. Managing the workload of students and employees is a complex undertaking that requires a cohesive package of activities. Utrecht University is continually in search of concrete ways to reduce that workload, such as the agreement to offer temporary lecturers a minimum appointment of 0.7 FTE for a period of four years. For this reason, we will continue to invest in supervision and support, personal development and leadership. We plan to continue prioritising the issue of workload and expect, through additional attention and appreciation for collaboration and team achievements, to contribute effectively to a healthy work and study climate.

Focus on sustainable development

Based on our social mandate as a public institution, we wish to contribute to the creation of a better world. In the recent period, we have made major strides in our efforts to realise sustainable operations, geared toward curtailing CO₂ emissions, reducing energy consumption, deploying sustainable alternatives and raising awareness among students and staff.

Unlike in previous years, in the coming years we will make use of the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as a helpful instrument as we seek to identify challenges and potential solutions. Our education and research contribute to enhanced knowledge of all seventeen SDGs. The SDG perspective is an excellent match for multidisciplinary education and research and for cross-border collaboration.

The regional ecosystem is vital to the University's development, and in return, the University makes a substantial contribution to sustainable development in the region. The city of Utrecht and the Utrecht region serve as a testing ground for education and research. Alongside our partners, University Medical Center Utrecht and HU University of Applied Sciences, we are continuing to work on the further development of Utrecht Science Park, while also contributing to the challenges facing society, such as
those with regard to primary and secondary education, the development of the city of Utrecht and
diversity recovery.

**Transition to Open Science**

In 2017, in order to accelerate and improve the realisation of research results and their societal impact, we
decided to make the transition to open science. By doing so, we hope to fundamentally alter the practice of
education and research in the coming years. Open science calls for an open outlook and open attitude and
affects our relationship with society. Research results are made freely available to others at the earliest
possible stage. Open science touches on the structure of the research and education agenda, the diversity
of that agenda and therefore the diversity of our employees. It changes the way we communicate with one
another and the contact with society at large. Open science emphasises ‘team science’ and affects our
dealings with one another as colleagues. We strive to reduce individual competition and achieve an open
academic culture. Providing all university employees optimum support in their work and careers will
require adjustments to the evaluation system: a new framework for ‘Recognition and Appreciation’.

Because this transition is a highly complex undertaking, a chapter on the organisation will now follow: the
combined efforts of all parties will be needed in order to realise open science in the years ahead.
4. An open and resilient academic community

It seems so natural for Utrecht University to be a close-knit academic community in which people are involved with one another and where space exists for sharing knowledge and open debate. Yet it does not happen by itself: it requires attention and effort from all of us, each and every day. We want the community to remain this way and will therefore, in the coming period, invest in an environment in which everyone feels welcome and that they are a part of the community.

Academic community for everyone

Our organisation values the contributions of all students, employees and alumni, regardless of their position, gender, ethnicity, culture, deployability or any other aspect of their personal background. Making the most of diverse qualities calls for active policy, inclusive leadership and a socially safe environment. Within the organisation, we will continue to pay extra attention to the public values of equality, diversity, inclusion, openness, accessibility and mutual respect.

The results in education, research, operational management and social impact are achieved through teamwork, in which all the talents and qualities of every employee are valued. Through recognition and appreciation, we can embed respect and trust more deeply in our organisation. It impacts the way we communicate and interact with one another and with the outside world. International students and employees should feel at home and feel welcome at our University, while alumni should be a permanent part of our community.

To effectively support the formation of the university community, we will continue to invest in a warm connection, a stimulating working environment and a lively and accessible campus. A more hybrid form of working will take shape, both at home and in the university buildings. This will also require experimentation with new methods of working and cooperation.

Lines of action

- We will explicitly strengthen the connecting and collaborating functions in our buildings and experiment with working methods. We learn from our COVID-19 experiences: when elaborating the accommodation assignment, we invest in a good balance between physical presence and online working and studying.
- We will strengthen our diversity policy by establishing the ‘Equality, Diversity & Inclusion’ (EDI) steering group and appointing a Diversity Dean. We will continue to express our vision on this theme through actions including the promotion of integration in training programmes, inclusive curricula and the improvement of recruitment and selection, as well as the accessibility of our buildings.
- We will work to promote extensive involvement of our community in decision-making and toward the further democratisation of that decision-making.
- In early 2022, a new University-wide framework for the ‘Recognition and Appreciation’ of all employees will be introduced. We will reduce the individual workload on employees using teamwork, create a calmer environment in teams and encourage complementarity. By 2025, it will be matter of course for employees choose a variety of career paths and specialise in different areas: education, research, impact and/or leadership.
- We will improve our activities with regard to the guidance and practical support of international students and employees; this will naturally include a warm welcome for all. And we will promote multilingual meetings by means of lingua receptiva.
- Utrecht University will provide high-quality and comprehensive support to students, staff, alumni and external parties. Cooperation between academic and non-academic staff, between the various support departments and between University and faculty services will be a natural part of these efforts.

Leadership, attention to well-being and space for development

Utrecht University strives to maintain a culture of openness and cooperation, a culture in which establishing connections both internally and externally is the most natural thing in the world, and in which employees
practise integral collaboration that transcends disciplines and/or departments. Leadership at all levels is the only way to make this culture possible. Such leadership must be open to new ideas. It must be leadership that focuses on trust, bottom-up cooperation and acting in the best interest of the entire University. To that end, leadership development is the responsibility of everyone in the organisation.

Utrecht University employees are open to feedback and change and wish to continue to develop throughout life. Managers provide employees with latitude for development and encourage efforts in that area. The University encourages all staff members to acquire personal leadership competences within their respective roles and to learn from each other at work. Leadership plays a role in all kinds of issues, whether major or minor, from the way we communicate with each other at the University to constructively flagging issues that can be improved and being mindful of others.

As an employer, we want to take good care of our people and invest in the well-being of all our students and employees. We understand that combating workload is a complex undertaking. Everyone need not do the same, nor do so equally intensively. When new initiatives arise, we will carefully assess the added value and decide whether this will replace existing work or if we can postpone certain other matters.

**Lines of action**

- With regard to leadership development, the focus for the coming period will be on agreeing realistic working methods, on establishing clear team goals, on promoting student and employee well-being and on guaranteeing social safety. When selecting managers and promoting employees to management positions, we will pay additional attention to competences in the leadership profile and to the core values of the University.
- We will increase the diversity in development pathways for employees and encourage continuous development, sustainable employability and mobility. We will strengthen the range of development opportunities available to all our employees, aimed at aspects including intercultural and leadership competences, cooperating effectively and giving and receiving feedback.
- We will enhance the autonomy and ownership of employees and ensure the preconditions needed to achieve a proper work-life balance. We will sharpen our focus, in part by explicitly identifying what we will no longer be doing.

**Sustainable development within the University**

In an explicit effort to help create a better world and a sustainable society and to contribute specifically to the SDGs, we want to connect knowledge on sustainability (gained through education and research) to our operational management. At the same time, we will make use of our own operations and buildings and grounds by providing an environment for academic research. During the previous period, we took the first steps toward ensuring the SDGs are recognisably reflected in our educational curriculum and we are now continuing those efforts, basing our thinking more strongly on global development issues.

We will continue to build on existing strategies and ongoing initiatives and wish, as a university, to make a real difference in coming years in connection with the theme of sustainability. Through our operational management, we are able to contribute to over half of the SDGs, from the ‘Climate Action’ theme to the ‘Gender Equality’ theme. In keeping with the SDGs, we are working to achieve climate-neutral, zero-waste operations by 2030 and to increase the local biodiversity.

**Lines of action**

- We will tangibly embed the Sustainable Development Goals in our teaching.
- Our strategic research themes focus on the transition to a sustainable society and do so in interaction with civil society actors.
- In our buildings and on our grounds, we will create sustainability-related testing grounds in which we will bring together teaching, research and operational management. We will maximise our social impact by utilising renewable energy, thereby reducing our energy consumption and working toward a zero-waste university.
• We will create employment opportunities for individuals with obstacles to job-market participation, be socially responsible in our purchasing practices and invest in capacity building and collaboration with partners in lower-income countries.
• With regard to education, we will emphatically pursue partnerships in the region in order to promote access to equal opportunities.
• In connection with the Sustainability programme, we are developing a strategy aimed at increasing biodiversity and further reducing CO₂ emissions. We are using our monitor to track the results and are comparing these to the key performance indicators.

Operational management that is open to change and innovation

Utrecht University wishes to strengthen and accelerate innovative power and the capacity for change. During the COVID-19 crisis, we have seen and experienced that it is possible to implement many changes and innovations within a short span of time. Everyone saw the urgency and felt the necessity. We want to cherish this agility and potential for change. Groups with a diverse composition will assemble quickly, conduct effective consultation and deliver high-quality results. We plan to address complex issues in more integral fashion, working from different disciplines and units.

Digitisation offers many opportunities to innovate and improve services. Together with automation, it offers possibilities to improve, streamline, standardise and accelerate administrative processes in the areas of education, Human Resources and finance. This will entail significant IT investments.

Lines of action
• We will draft a domain plan for each support domain which will inform the development of quality, professionalism and working methods within that domain. Where this support is concerned, we will take integrality between the services into account at all times.
• We will be launching a programme aimed at efficient and future-proof business administration for the education, Human Resources, finance and facilities domains.
5. Outstanding education

Education at Utrecht University is valuable due to its strong ties to research and its societal impact. Our educational vision is based on a challenging learning environment that does justice to the fact that different students have different ambitions and talents. In the coming period, we will continue our commitment to innovative, flexible and future-proof education of a high quality.

Education for critical global citizens

In today's society, there is a growing demand for individuals with analytical thinking skills and the ability to connect different perspectives. This requires not only specialist knowledge, but also skills such as the capacity to critically evaluate insights and look beyond borders. To familiarise students with these qualities, Utrecht University will take a following step in the development of the Utrecht teaching model in the coming period: from academic success to successful students. The guiding principle is to train students to be critical global citizens with an eye for the importance of open society. We offer them opportunities to gain experience in different disciplines and to complete a large portion of the specialisation phase outside their own programme. Students can further expand their individual curricula by filling their free elective space with courses at the strategic alliance partners, Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research and University Medical Center Utrecht. Together with partner universities in Leuven, London, Cape Town, Sydney, Hong Kong and Toronto, we are setting out agendas for the long term.

We want to align our teaching activities with our research profile to a far greater extent than is currently the case. To that end, we are developing an attractive curriculum for all Bachelor's students in which there is room for philosophy, ethics, didactic techniques, issues of academic freedom and integrity and the principles of open society. We will also promote interdisciplinarity in the regular and elective components of the curriculum, with visible inclusion of the strategic themes. Every student will become acquainted with research from the very start of their Bachelor phase. We will integrate the principles of open science into our teaching as well.

Lines of action

• To make room for multidisciplinary education, we plan to thoroughly evaluate the range of disciplinary electives currently on offer in the Bachelor phase.
• The strategic themes of the University's research profile nourish our education; we want these strategic themes to be clearly reflected in our Bachelor's and Master's programmes, as well as in our educational activities aimed at professionals.
• We will work together to explore whether it is possible, and how, we might structure a University-wide core curriculum for our Bachelor's programmes.
• We will work with our alliance partners the Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research and the University Medical Center Utrecht to further coordinate the curriculum and increase the jointly offered programmes, including challenge-based education.
• We will actively contribute to the development of the future European agendas for higher education and research. Together with other partners in the CHARM-EU alliance, we will work on multidisciplinary educational innovations including challenged-based education, student-led education and blended learning.
• We will encourage the development of reusable digital teaching material, and work to see that it is centrally stored and made available to others.

Supporting lecturers

Education begins with expert lecturers who have been trained in both research and teaching. The 2018 Institutional Quality Assurance Audit revealed that Utrecht University is characterised by a culture of pursuing quality that includes continuous efforts to improve teaching. In order to provide high-quality education, offering adequate support to lecturers is essential – certainly in periods when lecturers are increasingly affected by excessive workload. This is why we plan to invest in support for lecturers and make
educational performance our central focus in the coming period. The Centre for Academic Teaching, which was established in the previous planning period, will be the central portal for lecturer cooperation, development and support.

**Lines of action**
- In cooperation with faculty partners, we will optimise the professional development of lecturers, educational innovation and efforts to expand teaching-related knowledge in the Centre for Academic Teaching.
- We will deploy learning analytics in order to further improve the quality of teaching, student counselling and guidance, and teaching materials. We will reinforce the relevant infrastructure and develop accompanying policy that takes AVG, privacy issues and ethical guidelines into account.

**Concern for student well-being**

The University supports students as they explore and develop their personal and professional identities. A good start, a fitting place and well-being are vital elements in this regard, Utrecht University has established a counselling chain from lecturers to student psychologists. Despite this, the perceived workload of students has increased in recent years, with students experiencing a lack of confidence and a growing pressure to succeed. In the coming planning period, we will therefore continue the activities of the Student Welfare Task Force established in 2018.

Student organisations also contribute to the feeling of community and well-being of students, especially in combination with online education. The University therefore supports a flourishing community of study associations and other student clubs and associations, while cherishing the warm relations with the student organisations.

UU is committed to organising partnerships with universities of applied sciences in order to realise exchange. It should be possible for students to follow courses at different institutions and transfer any credits they have obtained elsewhere without incurring any unnecessary delays to their studies. We are increasing the possibilities for student mobility and encouraging an open community of students.

**Lines of action**
- We will continue the Student Welfare Task Force, which monitors and advises the Executive Board concerning measures that could prevent excessive workload.
- We will launch an initiative aimed at further reinforcing and harmonising the counselling chain for students (lecturers, tutors, study advisers, student counsellors, student psychologists and confidential counsellors for inappropriate behaviour, career service and skills lab). The services will remain informal and adequately organised.
- Utrecht University will invest in the possibilities for exchanging course modules with universities of applied sciences, and with the HU University of Applied Sciences in particular.

**Professional education**

In the coming years, Utrecht University intends to continue work on the modularisation of education: evaluation will be more competence-based and more of the teaching will be offered in the form of flexible units. Digital developments and the course offerings of various parties make it possible to assemble an individual curriculum. This gives students greater flexibility to combine their studies with other activities and responsibilities. Modularisation also offers opportunities to facilitate education for professionals. Graduates will continue to develop themselves, with alumni becoming students for life. Collaboration with alumni, social and strategic partners will be a two-way street and will generate new knowledge. We will nourish alumni with the latest insights and knowledge (and networks), so that they too can work towards solutions and nourish our University in turn. We wish to provide an innovative and cohesive range of educational options, from Bachelor’s degrees to alumni education.
Lines of action

- We will expand the possibilities for flexible education.
- We will offer attractive Education for Professionals programmes, together with the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht and other regional partners. The education we provide will be connected to the expertise of the faculties (including research expertise) and the strategic themes. The University will support lecturers as they develop new course options.

Social responsibility and entrepreneurship

The University offers students an environment in which they are able to develop their talents to the greatest possible extent, so that, upon graduation, they are able to contribute to resolving the challenges facing society. Such challenges are often complex and defy straightforward solutions. To prepare students for these challenges, they take part in what is known as community-engaged learning during their degree programmes: collaborations with scientists, social partners and private citizens aimed at resolving social issues. This teaches students how theory and practice are connected while at the same time enabling them to make an immediate impact on society. Because an enterprising attitude is an important competence in this regard, we will continue to focus on entrepreneurial education. Initiatives aimed specifically at societal challenges, such as UtrechtInc students, the Utrecht University Social Entrepreneurship Initiative and Dutch Students For Entrepreneurship, contribute to realising this goal.

Utrecht University feels a particular responsibility will regard to education in the city and region of Utrecht. Together with the municipality and the educational partners, the University is working on concrete solutions such as fast-track courses, work placements and supervision in schools. In addition, the University wants to spark enthusiasm among students for choosing a career in education. The University wishes to share knowledge and experience with educational partners in the region and thereby contribute to resolving the issue of inequality of opportunity in education.

Lines of action

- Community engaged learning will be permanently integrated into the curriculum.
- We are encouraging the entrepreneurial spirit, innovation and creativity, along with other related skills, among students and employees. We are strengthening the entrepreneurship courses in the existing curriculum.
- Together with the HU University of Applied Sciences Utrecht and other educational partners in the city and the region of Utrecht, we are developing an initiative aimed at reducing the shortage of teachers, using each other's knowledge and courses, the exchange of professionals, and at advancing accessibility of education and equal opportunities.
- We are exploring possibilities for enabling students to gain teaching skills and earn a Student Teaching Qualification during their degree programme.
6. **Frontier research**

An effective symbiosis between independent research and programmed research is essential to achieving scientific breakthroughs and addressing societal challenges. At Utrecht University, independent and affiliated research complement one another, as they must if we are to realise and maintain a position in the scientific vanguard.

**Multidisciplinary collaboration**

Utrecht University has been promoting multidisciplinary research collaborations for many years. Working within the context of the four strategic themes, researchers help find solutions to the problems facing society. The multidisciplinary research in the strategic themes is based on fundamental and applied research and features a strong disciplinary basis.

The strategic themes are now indispensable to our profile. They provide the starting point for collaboration both within the University and with external partners, such as in our alliance with Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research and University Medical Center Utrecht, and in strategic partnerships with international universities and cooperation with local and national governments, companies and other organisations. We intend to further anchor the strategic themes within our organisation in the coming period. We will use hubs, focus areas and other initiatives to continue to foster innovation of research.

**Lines of action**

- We will ensure structural funding for the strategic themes. We will also work to structurally embed the themes in our education and research policies at the faculty and University-wide levels, such as in the Professor Policy.
- We will further coordinate the research being conducted within the strategic alliance with Eindhoven University of Technology, Wageningen University & Research and University Medical Center Utrecht and bundle the available expertise.
- Together with our international strategic partners, we will be formulating projects regarding specific profile themes that can substantively enhance our research while also working to shape new forms of international collaboration that are less dependent on physical mobility.
- We will be joining a larger number of international networks. For each international network, we will be formulating a multi-year strategy linked to our strategic aims. At the same time, we will be making clear choices for a limited number of strategic partners, with whom we will cultivate intensive, long-term partnerships.

**Opportunities for independent research**

An effective symbiosis between independent and affiliated research serves as the basis for attracting talented academics from in the Netherlands and abroad, an inspiring work environment, motivated employees, team science and the development of the strategic themes. It is the same basis that makes the University an attractive collaborative partner and enables it to successfully secure research funding. We will also cooperate with the Utrecht University Fund to obtain funding for special research projects.

**Lines of action**

- We ensure that we remain an attractive employer for talented researchers from the Netherlands and abroad and invest in outstanding research teams, with room for independent and affiliated research with good facilities.
- We provide support to research teams in order to position their funding applications as effectively as possible.
- To maintain a solid share in the external funding of programmed research, we are combining our strengths within the alliance with regard to contract funding, i.e. the ‘third flow’.
Trailblazer in open science

The University wishes to be a trailblazer in the field of open science, with optimum interaction between science and society. Greater emphasis will be placed on the quality of publications. Expanding the availability of research results and research data will serve to similarly increase their transparency, applicability and reuse. This will allow valuable knowledge to be shared and applied by researchers, politicians, the business community and civic institutions in our country and elsewhere. Research and education are the result of teamwork, in which every contribution is seen and valued. We are actively working toward open science based on the strategic themes as well.

Lines of action

• In late 2020, every Faculty Board will oversee the integral implementation of open science within its faculty.
• Every student and scientist will work according to the principles of open science in terms of open access, FAIR Data and Software, public engagement and ‘Recognition and Appreciation’. Students and employees will also conduct themselves as professionals in their dealings with civil society actors. To that end, we will provide optimum support to students and employees.
• We will recognise and appreciate the impact activities of our scientists. In the coming years, we want to further increase this impact by expanding the visibility of how we, through our education and research, are realising exchange with society.

Development of young researchers

PhD candidates and postdocs are a crucial group within our University community and are vital to the future and innovation of academic research and education. The University sees a role for itself in the professional development of all young researchers, also in light of next steps in their career, whether in or outside the academic community. In addition to academic development, the University is investing in the development of practical and personal skills in preparation for the job market. The well-being of PhD candidates is important both to the candidates themselves and to the University. Utrecht University assumes responsibility for creating a safe working environment for PhD candidates and supporting them in their personal development.

Lines of action

• We effectively prepare young researchers for their continued career by (among other things) helping them gain experience with teaching and research, familiarising them with academic integrity and offering them opportunities to earn qualifications.
• Career Service develops activities specifically aimed at young researchers in order to prepare them for a career outside the university setting.
• Under the auspices of the Graduate Committee, we are optimising the support and guidance for PhD candidates, with special attention paid to their well-being.

A strong research infrastructure

Utrecht University connects ecosystems of knowledge and innovation by investing in research infrastructure in connection with the strategic themes. All major university infrastructures are widely accessible and include facilities for multiple disciplines. Where desirable, the university research infrastructure will be part of larger national and international infrastructure, enabling UU to expand access to advanced equipment and datasets for its researchers. To ensure effective investment, we will coordinate with our alliance partners and other parties.

Utrecht University will intensify relationships in the regional knowledge chain to create space for joint innovations, sharing expertise and inspiring one another. Entrepreneurship in research will be encouraged and supported in the broadest sense: entrepreneurship, valorisation and spin-offs. This goes hand in hand
with the further development and integration of entrepreneurial education into the curriculum and the more explicit ‘Recognition and Appreciation’ of impact activities.

Lines of action

- We will continue the Research IT programme. To the same end, we will be realising a digital infrastructure that provides a safe and secure environment for the data and infrastructure that researchers need to collaborate, including support for research data.
- We will strengthen the entire research innovation chain, from encouraging and supporting entrepreneurship and start-ups to matching business intelligence and business development support.
- We will develop creative workshops and testing grounds as incubators for innovation in collaboration with alliance partners and partners in Utrecht Science Park, the city and the region.

The Sustainable Development Goals and Utrecht University

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are seventeen global, sustainable development goals aimed at making the world a better place by 2030. These goals were established by the United Nations, are widely supported and align seamlessly to Utrecht University's own mission. The SDGs reveal the breadth of the ecological, economic and social challenges we are currently facing. They touch on subjects including biodiversity, climate change, access to clean drinking water, education and gender equality. Utrecht University is helping achieve the SDGs through a broad range of teaching programmes and innovative multidisciplinary research aimed at the further development of goals to serve as stepping stones on our way to a sustainable society. We are contributing to the SDGs through our operational management as well. Sustainable development is at the heart of everything we do.