

## Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment








### Case study “Recognition & Rewards Programme”

Authors: Kim Huijpen, Programme Manager Recognition & Rewards, and Stefan Penders, Policy Advisor Internationalisation, Recognition and Rewards, Universities of the Netherlands (UNL).

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| <b>Country</b>      | <b>Country/Region/International</b><br>The Netherlands   |
| <b>Name</b>         | <b>Official name of the initiative</b><br>Recognition & Rewards Programme  |
| <b>Institution</b>  | <b>Name of the institution(s) responsible for the initiative</b><br>Universities of The Netherlands  |
| <b>Stakeholders</b> | <b>Names of other organisations/communities involved</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Netherlands Federation of Academic Medical Centres (NFU)</li> <li>• Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW)</li> <li>• The Dutch Research Council (NWO)</li> <li>• Foundation for Dutch Scientific Research Institutes</li> <li>• Care Research Netherlands (ZonMw)</li> <li>• Network of Ideologically-based Universities</li> </ul> <p>All member institutions of Universities of The Netherlands (UNL):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delft University of Technology</li> <li>• Eindhoven University of Technology</li> <li>• Erasmus University Rotterdam</li> <li>• Leiden University</li> <li>• Maastricht University</li> <li>• Open University</li> <li>• Radboud University</li> <li>• Tilburg University</li> <li>• University of Amsterdam</li> <li>• University of Groningen</li> <li>• University of Twente</li> <li>• Utrecht University</li> <li>• Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam</li> <li>• Wageningen University &amp; Research</li> </ul> |

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|                      | <p>All member institutions of the Netherlands Federation of Academic Medical Centres (NFU):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Amsterdam University Medical Centre</li> <li>• Erasmus Medical Centre</li> <li>• Leiden University Medical Center</li> <li>• Maastricht University Medical Centre+</li> <li>• Radboud University Medical Centre</li> <li>• University Medical Center Groningen</li> <li>• University Medical Center Utrecht</li> </ul> <p>All member institutions of the Network of Ideologically-based Universities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Protestant Theological University</li> <li>• Theological University Kampen   Utrecht</li> <li>• Theological University of Apeldoorn</li> <li>• University of Humanistic Studies</li> </ul> |
| <b>Year</b>          | <p><b>When the initiative was launched</b></p> <p>January 2020</p>   |
| <b>Documentation</b> | <p><b>Link to the main document describing the initiative</b></p> <p><a href="#">Room for everyone's talent – towards a new balance in recognising and rewarding academics</a> (2019)</p> <p><a href="#">Room for everyone's talent in practice</a> (2023)</p> <p><a href="#">Summary of the Recognition &amp; Rewards programme plan 2022–2026</a></p>  |
| <b>Website</b>       | <p><b>Link to the website of the initiative (if available)</b></p> <p><a href="https://recognitionrewards.nl/">https://recognitionrewards.nl/</a></p>  |
| <b>Summary</b>       | <p><b>Brief description of the initiative</b></p> <p>In a position paper published in November 2019, "<a href="#">Room for everyone's talent – towards a new balance in recognising and rewarding academics</a>," the Netherlands' public knowledge institutions and research funders (UNL, NFU, KNAW, NWO, and ZonMw) voiced a common ambition to modernise the current recognition and rewards system.</p> <p>They support the following stated aims:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The diversification and vitalization of career paths, thereby promoting excellence in each of the key talent areas</li> </ul>   |

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|  | <p>(education, research, impact, patient care and leadership in academia)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The acknowledgment of both the independence and individual qualities and ambitions of academics, as well as recognising team performance (Team Science)</li> <li>• A shift in focus away from quantitative elements (such as the number of publications) and toward the quality of the work</li> <li>• A stimulation of all aspects of Open Science</li> <li>• More emphasis on the value of leadership in academia</li> </ul> <p>The position paper supports a more holistic view of academic achievements through two specific approaches:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Redesigning academic career paths: the commitment to create a greater diversity in career paths for academic staff with room for individual academics' strengths and ambitions.</li> <li>• Quality assessment of research and research proposals: Research should be assessed for content and quality, not just for quantity or for the journal it was published in.</li> </ul> <p>The real changes takes place within institutions at the level of faculties, departments, institutes, divisions and teams. The joint programme is aimed at enabling the relevant partners to implement the ambitions of the programme in a cohesive manner. Experimentation, inspiration, co-creation, sharing good practices and learning from each other are key elements of this joint programme. We therefore organise regular consultations, meetings and an annual festival to promote coordination and mutual inspiration. We also share good practices on the online community platform RRview. Furthermore, we have published several <a href="#">e-magazine's</a> containing various good practices and other information.</p> <p>In summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 18 Recognition &amp; Rewards committees from all 14 research universities, research institutes and funders were installed in 2020</li> <li>• Committees stimulate intended culture change at institutional level</li> <li>• There is a great and inspiring diversity of approaches</li> <li>• Inspiring, experimenting, co-creating, sharing good practices and mutual learning are central to the joint programme</li> <li>• On the national level we aim to facilitate these activities in a number of ways via meetings, an annual festival and we have</li> </ul> |
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|                        | <p>developed an online community platform to share experiences and good practices</p> <div>  <div> <h3>Guiding principles</h3> <div> <div>  <p>Culture change is a <b>fundamental change of beliefs</b>; not just change in rules of the game</p> </div> <div>  <p>Changing culture is difficult and <b>takes a long time</b></p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Broad dialogue in academia</b> is needed: we listen to concerns, questions &amp; dilemmas from academic community</p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Sharing good practices</b> and experimenting will initiate desired movement</p> </div> <div>  <p><b>Balance</b>: giving room for ideas (<b>diverging</b>) and bringing together good practices (<b>converging</b>)</p> </div> <div>  <p>Importance of <b>good leadership in academia</b> to make change work</p> </div> </div> <p>RECOGNITION &amp; REWARDS</p> </div> <p>Although reforming the system of recognising and rewarding academic work involves a profound culture change, it is also important that new tools and insights are embedded in national and other frameworks, processes and systems. To this end, we worked on a follow-up to the position paper and sought collaboration with the employers' organisations. The first step in this direction was a passage about Recognition &amp; Rewards in the Collective Labour Agreement for Dutch Universities (CAO NU).</p> <p>Note: In this case study we will mostly zoom into the first aim of the position paper 'the diversification and vitalization of career paths' while the Recognition &amp; Rewards programme has a broader mission.</p> </div> |
| <b>Target audience</b> | <p><b>Description of the main target audience of the initiative</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The target audience is the whole ecosystem of academic activity.</li> <li>Our Recognition &amp; Rewards community exists of local Recognition &amp; Rewards project leads (mostly senior HR advisors), chairs/academic leads of the local Recognition &amp; Rewards programmes (mostly professors among which some deans), members of the local Recognition &amp; Rewards committees or steering groups, member of the national Recognition &amp; Rewards steering groups and other interested colleagues.</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Geographical</b>    | <p><b>Description of the primary geographical scope of application</b></p>   |

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| <b>scope</b>                   | The Netherlands   |
| <b>International potential</b> | <p><b>Description of the international potential for adaptation</b></p> <p>Academic activity is international by its very nature. People, funding and research output can and should all transverse national borders and continents. It does not make sense to reform academic careers in one country alone. So, of course, our work is inspired by others. Important documents in the first phases of the Recognition &amp; Rewards programme were the San Francisco declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), the Leiden Manifesto and The Metric Tide. Another great inspiration was the work of the Advancing Teaching Network and their <a href="#">Career Framework for University Teaching</a>.</p> <p>A real shift towards new assessment practices requires multiple national and international actors to make changes. When ARRA and CoARA came along with an agenda and key principles that largely overlapped with the Recognition &amp; Rewards ambitions, there was immediate support among the Recognition &amp; Rewards stakeholders. This support is now being translated into the founding of a National Chapter, to further strengthen the relationship between both initiatives. The Dutch parliament is very interested in these international developments, though also a little worried that Dutch science will lose its strong international position. That's why they've asked the Advisory Council for Science, Technology and Innovation (AWTI) to assess and</p> <p>clarify how the quality of science can be determined. The AWTI's report, published at the end of 2022 and presented to parliament, notes that there are no indications that Recognition &amp; Rewards negatively impacts the international position of Dutch science.</p> <p>Another very important development is that research funders from around the world have signed the Statement of Principles on Recognising and Rewarding Researchers. The statement sets out principles of how funders will work together to achieve new ways of assessing research and researchers</p> |
| <b>Goal</b>                    | <p><b>Description of the intended change</b></p> <p>We aim for a healthy and inspiring environment for our academic staff. Where all talents are valued: teaching, research, impact, patient care and good leadership in academia. In the Netherlands, but also</p>   |



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|                  | across the world.   |
| <b>Relevance</b> | <p><b>Description of the key elements that are relevant for reforming career assessment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Universities and university medical centres will create greater diversity in career paths for the positions of assistant professor, associate professor and full professor, thus doing justice to individual academics' strengths and ambitions in one or more key areas (education, research, impact, leadership and – in university medical centres – patient care).</li> <li>• Our guiding principle is always the interconnectedness of education and research, typical of the Dutch university system. The combination of teaching and research continues to form the foundation of academic careers of assistant, associate and full professors. The balance between teaching and research can vary from one staff member to another.</li> <li>• It will become possible to adapt one's profile in the course of one's career. The (selected and agreed) profile is central to the assessment of academics. Whereas previously academics felt that they had to excel in everything, they now have more opportunities to specialise in one of the key areas: education, research, impact, leadership and – in university medical centres – patient care.</li> <li>• Within a team, department or faculty, the different profiles and backgrounds are integrated into a coherent whole. A choice for a particular profile is always made in consultation with the supervisor/manager and must fit the team's strategy.</li> <li>• Departments and other organisational units translate their strategy into a personnel plan, as is done in a Strategic Personnel Plan (SPP), for example. In this plan, departments and other organisational units describe the talents they need in order to realise their vision and mission. Diversification is key in this respect. They also indicate what they expect of employees with regard to their contribution to the collective.</li> <li>• With respect to the recruitment, development, appointment and promotion of academic staff, universities, university medical centres and research institutes will specify which quality features will be used in the different key areas (education, research, leadership, impact and patient care). In doing so, they will take into account differences between disciplines, share good practices and engage in national coordination where possible. They will also actively involve the</li> </ul> |

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|                     | <p>appointment advisory committees in these changes, for example by organising training courses.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Universities, university medical centres and research institutes will clarify how activities relating to open science and open education will be considered and/or prioritised as a topic of discussion in the development, assessment, appointment and promotion of staff. Within the institutions, teams are actively working on and with the principles of open science and FAIRification. Employees' efforts in this area will be part of the evaluation and annual appraisal interview.</li> </ul>  |
| <b>Qualitative</b>  | <p><b>Description of recommendations regarding qualitative assessment</b></p> <p>When appointing and promoting academic staff, universities, university medical centres and research institutes will increase the use of evidence-based CVs and assessment portfolios. In these formats, candidates can describe their profile and achievements in a coherent narrative. In addition to their research and teaching results, this enables candidates to better showcase their contributions to data sets, software, exhibitions, innovations, policy reports, digital learning materials and open science. They may use appropriate quantitative and qualitative methods and indicators as supporting evidence in this regard.</p> |
| <b>Quantitative</b> | <p><b>Description of recommendations regarding quantitative assessment</b></p> <p>The focus in evidence-based CVs is on a qualitative assessment method,</p> <p>supported by sound bibliometric and other quantitative indicators where relevant. We are moving away from the inappropriate use of the Journal Impact Factor and the h-index.</p>  |
| <b>Diversity</b>    | <p><b>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of diversity contributions, outputs and impacts</b></p> <p>By employing qualitative criteria tailored to the chosen focus of an academic's career, the programme also aims to create more room for a diversity of outputs that match the chosen field of focus. This is already evident in the evidence-based CV as employed by the Dutch Research Council for applications, where applicants may include such output as museum exhibitions, open-access databases and policy briefings.</p>   |

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| <b>Intersectoral mobility</b> | <p><b>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of intersectoral mobility</b></p> <p>We are switching to a system in which academics can make a mark in one or more key areas (diversification). In this system, the area profile of academics may change in the course of their career (vitalisation), and competences acquired outside of the academy are acknowledged as having added value.</p>  |
| <b>Career-stage</b>           | <p><b>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of career-stage</b></p> <p>Universities and university medical centres will create greater diversity in career paths for the positions of associate professor, assistant professor and full professor. Some universities also create career paths for teachers and/or researchers. All these jobs are part of the University Job Classification (UFO) under the heading Education and Research. UFO determines the level of a job, each job profile has classification criteria. The classification criteria for each job profile can be found in a matrix. The UFO system was put in place well before Recognition &amp; Rewards and remains a foundational framework within which academic functions are classified. For now, the UFO system does not seem to pose any obstacles to introducing these profiles and career paths. We might, however, strive recalibrate the UFO system in the future – together with employers' and employees' organisations.</p> |
| <b>Career-path</b>            | <p><b>Description of how initiative recognizes and supports consideration of career-paths</b></p> <p>Academics should be able to discuss this issue of recognition and rewards and influence how they are assessed. It is extremely important to give them the opportunity to develop new academic career pathways together. The desired culture change is a fundamental change of beliefs and behaviour; not just a change in the rules of the game. To achieve this, a broad dialogue in academia is needed. We think that sharing good practices and experimenting will initiate the desired movement. We also shouldn't underestimate the importance of good leadership in academia to make this change happen.</p>  |
| <b>Toolbox</b>                | <p><b>Description of related practical guides and toolkits</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This <a href="#">Dialogue tool</a> kit is a practical step-by-step plan which could help institutions to create dialogue with academics. It sums up the essentials for organising a dialogue, including</li> </ul>   |



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|                       | <p>suggestions for session formats and a guide for discussion moderators. An introduction to this toolkit can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A <a href="#">double interview</a> on the development of career paths</li> <li>• Five <a href="#">good practices</a> in developing career paths</li> </ul>   |
| <b>Implementation</b> | <p><b>Description of implementation process</b></p> <p>Many steps have been taken since the publication of the position paper “Room for everyone’s talent” (2019). Each institution has set up a Recognition &amp; Rewards committee. Universities and institutes have also written vision documents for their own organisations. Numerous experiments have been launched to put the principles of Recognition &amp; Rewards into practice.</p> <p>In 2023, a new phase has begun in which the institutions will be implementing new processes and tools to embed Recognition &amp; Rewards in practice. In the roadmap “Room for everyone’s talent in practice” we formulated the following concrete actions in relation to academic career paths:</p> <p><i>In 2023, we will create career and development paths for the positions of associate professor, assistant professor and professor with profiles or areas of focus within research, education, impact, leadership and patient care. During evaluations and annual appraisal interviews, supervisors will take into account the employee’s desired career path. These efforts will bring the career paths in line with the principles of Recognition &amp; Rewards.</i></p> |
| <b>Uptake</b>         | <p><b>Description of implementation uptake</b></p> <p>In the last quarter of 2023, the national programme team interviewed each Recognition &amp; Rewards project leader about the status of career paths within their own institution. In some cases, the conversation took place not with the project leader, but with an HR policy advisor. Based on these talks, a <a href="#">stocktaking overview</a> was drawn up showing the state of affairs at each institution, along with a number of summarising conclusions, in autumn 2023.</p> <p>Only universities are included in this inventory. The institute organisations of KNAW and NWO were not included because conducting research is their main task and work in the other core areas is less applicable. In March 2023, the Recognition &amp; Rewards working group of the universal medical centers conducted its own, separate inventory of existing career profiles and appraisal criteria within the centers.</p>   |

Based on interviews conducted, it is clear that that all institutions are in the process of creating dynamic differentiation in academics' career paths, as agreed in the roadmap "Room for everyone's talent in practice". However, the pace at which institutions are realising this differentiation varies. While some institutions are still in the development phase, others are already implementing career paths and/or profiles. Almost all universities have chosen to actually develop career paths and/or profiles. A few universities have deliberately chosen not to develop specific career paths but rather a modular system of career path options. Academics at these institutions can thus choose a 'profile' based on customisable options.

### **Terminology**

The terminology used by the institutions is by no means uniform. Some speak of career paths, others of development paths and still others of profiles and accents. Even within the institutions themselves, the same terminology is not always used. Initially, this seems to hinder comparison between institutions. In addition, in practice it still sometimes causes confusion of language. However, when zooming in on the underlying principle, namely diversifying and dynamising academic career paths, it becomes clear that academics at all institutions have room to choose their own emphasis within their positions. A key principle here is that a choice for a particular profile is always made in consultation with the supervisor/manager and must fit the team's strategy.

### **Core domains**

The position paper "Room for everyone's talent" identifies five core domains, namely education, research, impact, leadership and patient care. At most institutions, separate profiles exist for these domains or it is possible to emphasise or focus on them. For staff in academic positions (assistant professor, associate professor and full professor), the dual nature of education and research is actually always the starting point. Academics have to meet a number of basic requirements in the field of teaching and research, and can further profile themselves in one of both domains. At a few universities, the possibility to differentiate only exists from the position of assistant professor level 1 onwards.

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|  | <p>Regarding the domains of impact and leadership, universities make different choices. Some institutions assume that academics should always generate impact in the domains of education and research. For this reason, they have not developed a specific impact-focussed profile. Other universities have deliberately chosen to develop an impact-focussed profile. At this stage, it is difficult to say to what extent these differences are a barrier for academics considering a move to another institution.</p> <p>With regard to leadership, the same pattern is visible. Some of the institutions assume that all staff develop personal leadership. As soon as employees aspire to a leadership career path there is room to develop further on the point and choose a leadership profile.</p> <p>The core domain patient care only applies to the institutions with an university medical centre. Most university medical centers have developed their own profiles around the three core tasks of education, research and patient care. One university has also developed a generic patient care profile.</p> <p>Besides the core domains mentioned in the position paper, several institutions also distinguish other result areas, such as 'organisation' and 'team work'. Incidentally, these result areas are not equivalent to the aforementioned core domains. All employees are expected to contribute in these areas, without being able to profile themselves in this respect.</p> <p><b>Target group</b></p> <p>In line with the roadmap, all institutions have developed career paths (or a variant thereof) for assistant professors, associate professors and full professors. Some institutions have also already developed or intend to develop career paths for teachers and researchers. In this way, they aim to enable horizontal mobility. A few universities also intend to develop 'career paths' for PhD students and/or postdocs.</p> <p><b>Culture barometer</b></p> <p>To further assess whether Recognition &amp; Rewards is having an</p> |
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|                   | <p>impact, the programme launched a so-called “Culture barometer” survey in January 2024. Nearly 8000 scholars in the Netherlands responded to the survey. The “Culture barometer” showed that the aims of Recognition &amp; Rewards are broadly supported among Dutch academics. The diversification of career paths is considered a particularly desirable aim, and many think the Recognition &amp; Rewards programme will have a strong positive impact on academic life. However, the survey has also given cause to reflect. A significant minority of academics still feels that their work is insufficiently recognised and rewarded. Simultaneously, a majority of academics indicates that they have not yet seen much practical change within their work environment as a result of Recognition &amp; Rewards. Although this is an understandable result, given that many stakeholders have been busy developing career paths and are only now beginning with their implementation, it nevertheless underscores the importance of anchoring the tools and insights from the programme into practice. Of further note is that early career academics – particularly PhD candidates and postdocs – are not as familiar with the programme as their more senior peers.</p> <p>The results of the “Culture barometer” underline that we are on the right track: both the aims of the programme and the programme itself find broad support. However, the results also indicate that there is much work still to be done, from reaching early career academics to actually implementing the desired changes in academic practice.</p> <p>The full Culture barometer report and a summary and interpretation can be found <a href="#">here</a>.</p> |
| <b>Challenges</b> | <p><b>Description of identified implementation challenges/obstacles</b></p> <p><b>Mobility between institutions</b></p> <p>Almost all Dutch institutions do not expect the choice of a particular profile to be a barrier to transferring from one Dutch institution to another. However, the future will tell to what extent this is really the case. And transferring to a university in another country might become more difficult. Although of course we hope that with the Agreement on Reforming Research Assessment and CoARA a lot of countries will move in the same direction.</p>  |

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|  | <p><b>Criteria</b></p> <p>It is apparent that institutions are currently focusing mainly on developing (and implementing) career paths. The criteria/quality features for the various core domains are still being developed at the Dutch universities, university medical centres and research institutes. This is especially true in the domains of education and impact. Stakeholders have also signalled some difficulty with formulating qualitative criteria for teams, both in their own right and in connection to the assessment of individual academic within a given team.</p> <p><b>Bottlenecks</b></p> <p>With regard to career paths, several bottlenecks are identified. It is striking that these bottlenecks mainly occur around the existing criteria/quality features or new criteria/quality features to be developed. Most institutions now have a clear idea of what career paths and/or profiles should look like. To a lesser extent, this applies to the accompanying quality criteria/quality features, which are often still under development. This lack of clarity creates uncertainty among academics. Partly because of this, academics do not (yet) dare to choose a particular profile and many academics continue to prefer a generic or classical profile. Institutions indicate that academics find it difficult to let go of the existing criteria and are concerned that 'subjective' criteria will be used.</p> <p>Another question is on the basis of which criteria academics will be eligible for promotion in the future. There is still much uncertainty about this. Practice shows that many academics still prefer research. There is generally less interest in education and impact. Presumably, this has largely to do with the existing culture within institutions, where research performance counts above all else. Indeed, academics who have chosen to focus on education and impact do not report experiencing the same recognition and reward for their work as their colleagues with an emphasis on research. Conversely, academics with a focus on research might assume (unjustifiably) that choosing education or impact is an easier route to promotion. In other words, it comes down to the fact that the culture and associated behaviour have not yet fundamentally changed. So making a choice for a particular profile makes someone vulnerable.</p> <p>Career diversification depends partly on the size and character of an</p> |
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|                 | <p>institution or faculty. The smaller an institution or faculty, the more difficult it is for employees to emphasise. In addition, one faculty's focus is sometimes more on teaching than research (or vice versa). In practice, there sometimes appears to be little possibility to diversify.</p>   |
| <b>Benefits</b> | <p><b>Description of identified implementation benefits</b></p> <p>Many universities and university medical centers actively involve their own academics in developing career paths. Often, the university draws up a broad framework for the university as a whole. Such a framework usually contains development paths with principles for criteria/quality features and starting points for the procedure. On the basis of such a framework, faculties are given the space to develop development paths themselves. The purpose of a university-wide framework is to create transparency, and give direction and clarity.</p> <p>In many cases, input was initially collected from academics through dialogue sessions. This input is taken into account in the development of a university-wide framework, after which it is once again placed before academics. Many academics are also involved in the development of a university-wide framework in faculty career paths. Such an approach obviously takes a lot of time. But it ensures that academics themselves can influence the definitive versions of the career paths. In this way, Dutch universities create support for this development. The aim, after all, is for these career paths to be used. Through extensive consultation, we hope to guarantee that the developed career paths will find their fixed place in academic practice.</p> |