

A balance between tradition and modernity; between research and teaching; between fundamental and applied knowledge; between mass and quality: in our shared history, balance has always been the ideal that Leiden strived to attain. But in the 1960s a storm hit that threatened to knock everything off kilter.

A graph of Leiden student numbers from 1970 looks like an ECG. From 12,000 enrolled students in 1970 up to 18,000 in 1990, back down to 12,000 round the millennium and then a huge peak at today's 32,000. The eight years that our departing Rector oversaw witnessed the greatest absolute growth ever, with 1,000 students on average per year. All hands on deck in our teaching, therefore. But the big question was: how to carve out room for research?

*De glazen toren* tells the story of a balancing act in the most turbulent of circumstances. In 1973, lecturers saw their research time vanish due to an increase in teaching duties. Leiden University was a pioneer in its response, which was separate funding for research. Academics could submit their proposals to the board and the best of these were awarded funding. Who among you still remembers internal competitive research funding? Who can remember the Van der Waals Committee? First, this struck a new balance between teaching and research. Then the idea was adopted by the Ministry of Education and rolled out nationwide. Witness the birth of funding via a research organisation, and today's increasingly competitive funding arrangements. What the University came up with to regain its balance was intensified by legislation and now threatened to knock it off balance once again.

Another way to secure time for research was to tap into contract funding via a third party, research in collaboration with societal partners. The Leiden Bio Science Park from the 1980s is the showpiece for this. Once again, the government nabbed the idea and went one step further: all research had to be herded in the direction of *applied* by virtue of 'knowledge transfer.' And fundamental research was reined in with the 'knowledge application section.' Yet again, the University's own recipe for recovering its balance was prescribed from above in even higher doses until it was thrown off balance once more.

Since 1970, university courses have regularly changed format. To cope with the teaching burden, Leiden University experimented in the 1970s with short, structured programmes and selective *propaedeuses*, ten years before the legislator imposed this nationally. Leiden rewarded faculties that achieved better results with this, at the expense of those that didn't. Such 'output funding' was first tried at the Leiden hearth. Then, in the 1980s, the Ministry of Education borrowed this idea and based its national funding systems on it, ramping up the competition ever since. Competition between institutions forces them to serve an

unlimited group of students; if we don't watch out this will be at the expense of quality. Once again: a device that academia grasped to help keep its balance was wrested out of its hands and now looks likely to tip that very same balance.

Leiden's traditions have helped it maintain a secure footing. A governance culture focusing on professionalism, fairness and the incorporation of new ideas has helped it absorb severe shocks. The radical democratic governance model prescribed by law in 1970 was tempered by professional and technical solutions. The opposite of this – the hierarchical and commercial model that the law now prescribes – was supplemented with lively informal consultation at all levels of the organisation. In Carel Stolker, a master of such personal contact is departing.

Leiden University continues to find stability in an open, liberal environment, in the free search for knowledge, in robust self-confidence, in the ceremonial, and by keeping history alive. On 8 February all this comes together, and the balancing university once again finds itself on solid ground. The perfect opportunity to cast an eye over the long road behind us and the misty road ahead. We are proud to present *Groepsportret met dame* and *De glazen toren*, a balancing act of 445 years.