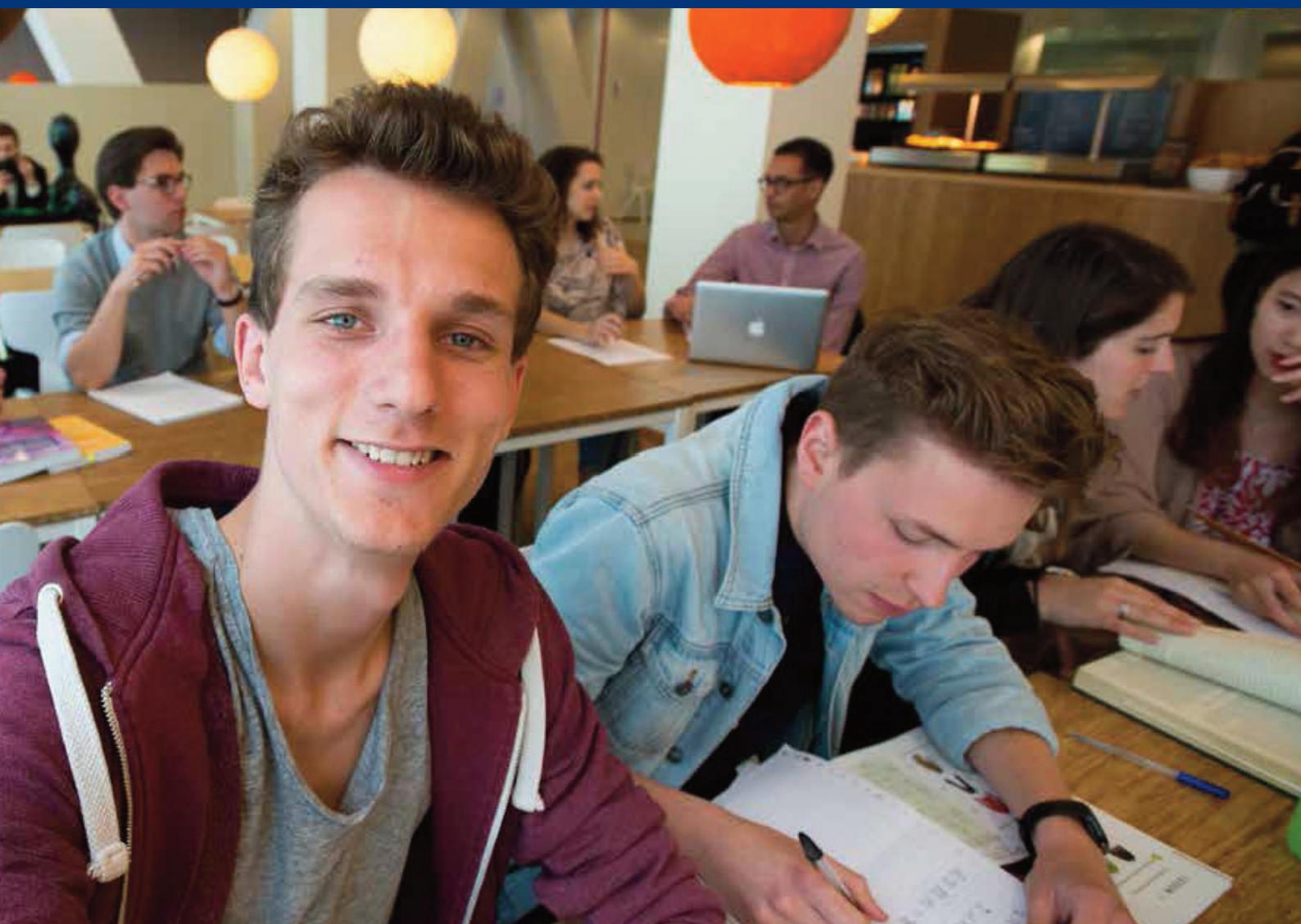


# Vision on teaching and learning: Learning@LeidenUniversity



**Universiteit  
Leiden**  
The Netherlands

Discover the world at Leiden University



# **Vision on teaching and learning: Learning@LeidenUniversity**

Leiden University

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# 1. Introduction

This document sets out Leiden University's renewed vision on teaching and learning. This vision is about what we want our future graduates to be and what that means for our curricula and our learning environment. It offers a long-term framework for the further development of our education and marks the start of a process of innovation. We address the question of why a new vision on teaching and learning is needed and explain the process towards achieving this. We then present the core of this vision, its distinctive elements and the ambitions that it engenders.

## The core of our vision on teaching and learning

We want our graduates to become academic professionals and engaged citizens who are able to take up positions both in and outside academia and contribute to solutions for the challenges facing our society. This is the ideal for which we strive in our teaching at Leiden University. It calls for teaching that is strongly research driven, that promotes active learning, stimulates the development of academic and professional skills and offers flexibility for individual learning paths. In addition, Leiden University's ideal teaching and learning environment is characterised by international and intercultural diversity and openness to society. Our teaching is continuously inspired and fed by both academic and societal challenges and problems.

This is the core of Leiden University's renewed vision on teaching and learning, which will determine the direction of our teaching over the next five years. This vision is an elaboration of the University's ambitions for teaching as expressed in the institutional plan 'Freedom to Excel' (2015-2020), namely:

- Activating talent by offering a stimulating academic working and learning environment;
- Ensuring innovation in teaching and learning by providing scope for the professionalism of teaching staff and facilitating technological and educational innovation.

The vision on teaching and learning presented here is the basis for a long-term University-wide agenda on educational innovation (see 'In conclusion').

The profile of our future graduates and the implications of this profile for our approach to teaching form the building blocks of this vision. We want to allow our students to develop and become academically and socially engaged professionals who are able to look beyond borders. Our proposed vision therefore centres on the integration of teaching and research, and defines the didactic requirements that our teaching has to meet. At the same time, the vision sets a marker on the horizon and offers guidelines for the further development and innovation of our teaching.

## Process

The University's vision on teaching and learning is the result of an intensive bottom-up process. Our lecturers, students, administrators and support staff, brought together in a University thinktank<sup>1</sup>, first laid the foundation of this vision on teaching and learning. This vision was then discussed in meetings of various bodies, including administrative staff, academic staff and students. During these meetings, the think-tank's ideas were discussed and participants built further on the concepts put forward. This document records the outcome of this process. The result is a vision on teaching and learning which is widely endorsed by the University community and which leaves sufficient flexibility for the specific requirements that specific disciplines impose. The vision marks the start of a continuous process of innovation in our education. In 2017 an overarching Educational Innovation Programme will be initiated, in which the different elements of this vision are translated into concrete actions.

<sup>1</sup> Members of the think-tank: Jan Kolen (Archaeology), Han de Winde (Science), Marlies Reinders (LUMC), Birgül Açiksöz (Law - assessor/student), Marleen Fleers (FGGA/HA/student), Richard Griffiths (Humanities), Ton van Haaften (Humanities; now HA), Armin Cuyvers (Law), Chris de Kruif (Law/HA), Jos Schaeken (FGGA/LUC; now: Humanities), Gideon Shimshon (CFI), Ann Wilson (FGGA/LUC), Jesse Bruins (Social and Behavioural Sciences-ICTO).

## 2. Why is educational innovation needed?

Everything around us is constantly changing: students, the University, technology, society, the job market, the world. The University has always striven to respond to these changing circumstances and to adapt the teaching to the needs of the time. A University vision on teaching and learning therefore needs a critical assessment at regular intervals. Innovation in education is a continuous process. Yet there are several reasons why we have decided to present our new vision on teaching and learning at this particular point in time. A number of developments within and outside the University make it necessary to treat the issue of innovation with greater urgency.

### External developments

We have identified three important external developments that fuel the need for a re-assessment of our approach to teaching and learning.

#### Internationalisation and diversity

Leiden University itself operates in a world of increasing international competition and continuing growth in the number of international students. More and more students are opting to study abroad and many of them have their sights set firmly on one of the top 100 universities, of which Leiden University is one. This means increasing cultural diversity in the intake of students, which can enormously enrich the educational experience for all students. It gives Dutch students the possibility of taking part in international education while remaining in their home country, but it also represents a challenge for them because of the greater competition for places in selective programmes or for positions on the job market. At the same time, the group of bicultural students finding their way to the University is growing. For this reason, too, programmes have to be accessible for a more interculturally diverse group of students than previously. Custom-made approaches in teaching are becoming increasingly important.

#### Technological developments

Rapid developments in technology are also forcing the University to rethink its approach to teaching. Many new providers are appearing on the global stage, and the University has to consider how to respond to these new providers of online teaching or modular education. Will future students build their own portfolio and follow their chosen modules ‘anytime, anywhere’? In that scenario, we have to ask ourselves what extras the University can offer and what added value we can provide. It is also important for the University to respond to the opportunities offered by new technologies for our on-campus teaching. Students today are digital natives: they acquire knowledge in different, more interactive ways than in the past. In addition, new digital tools are constantly appearing that can enrich our teaching and ensure that our students are more active participants in the educational process.

#### Dynamic job market

Finally, there are the developments on the labour market. The positions that our graduates will hold in the future still have to be largely created. The labour market for which we educate our students is becoming increasingly dynamic and consequently requires different knowledge and

skills from our graduates than previously. There is a strong call for 21st-century skills and transferable skills, such as collaboration, communication and entrepreneurship. At the same time, the labour market expects us to train students in critical thinking and the ability to resolve complex problems by applying rigorous scientific methods.

## **Internal developments**

There are three important internal developments that require Leiden University to adapt its vision on teaching and learning.

### **Islands of innovation**

An inventory and analysis of educational innovation projects at Leiden University shows the enormous efforts of our teachers aimed at innovation in our teaching. More than 150 innovative projects have been identified on a wide range of topics, such as digitisation, curriculum reform, skills teaching, internationalisation, active learning and community building. These projects, initiated by staff who have a passion for teaching, have proven highly effective. However, the strong potential of these projects is not being fully utilised: knowledge about innovation is widely dispersed and fragmented, and is not being shared sufficiently, benefits of scale are not being exploited and the connections between different innovations are not being recognised and implemented. A University-wide vision on teaching and learning can ensure that the aims of knowledge sharing, benefits of scale and connections are achieved.

### **Balance between research and teaching**

A second internal motivation for developing a shared vision on teaching and learning and a related innovation plan is the much-discussed imbalance between research and teaching. Careers within the University are still too biased towards research performance. This issue was recognised in the internal Report on Academic Career Policies adopted by the Executive Board in December 2014. Implementation of the plan started in 2015. One of the plan's recommendations was to make it possible to be promoted from Assistant to Associate Professor (or from Lecturer to Senior Lecturer) on the basis of teaching performance. This proposal forces us to look carefully at what exactly constitutes good or excellent teaching, and what aspects of teaching we *and* our students consider important.

### **Student satisfaction**

As a final point, the satisfaction of our students is an important motivation for educational innovation and improvement. There is considerable room for improvement in the master's programmes in particular. Student satisfaction will have a positive impact on study results, and is therefore certainly one of the indicators of teaching quality. The lack of satisfaction identified in the National Student Surveys in recent years, for example, compels us to take another, closer look at our programmes, curricula, courses and teaching methods and to reflect on how we can involve our students more actively in our teaching.



### 3. Developing the new vision on teaching and learning: Learning@LeidenUniversity

Leiden University's vision on teaching and learning sets out the goals for which students are educated and the core qualities that this requires of our teaching and of the learning environment. Taking Leiden University's identity as a research-intensive and internationally oriented university as the starting point, the University's vision on teaching and learning can be formulated as follows:

- Students are educated to become academic professionals and responsible and engaged citizens who are internationally and interculturally competent.
- The University is committed to achieving this by providing a research-driven and international learning environment where an active and ambitious attitude is encouraged and where students participate actively and strive to achieve their own ambitions.

There are three key elements to this vision, which are further explained below: (i) students, and what the University expects of them; (ii) the open orientation of the learning environment; and (iii) the didactic qualities of the curriculum.

#### i Students

Leiden University educates students for positions in academia and for almost all other sectors of society. Our graduates are able to critically evaluate scientific and societal problems and make well-informed choices in finding solutions for these problems. This calls for both academic and personal training, where students will have acquired the following profile after completing their studies:



They are academic professionals who have the academic knowledge and skills required by the job market of the future: professionals with a thorough knowledge of the discipline and a critical, inquisitive mindset. They are able to take on leading positions, are entrepreneurial and can work in partnership with colleagues from different disciplines and backgrounds.



As citizens, they engage with the societal challenges facing the world and want to play an active role in finding solutions. They have a clear sense of responsibility towards society.



They are interculturally and internationally competent. They can situate knowledge in an international context and are aware of the culturespecific and social nature of knowledge and values. They are able to make use of the international, intercultural and gender diversity that characterise our society and job market in order to arrive at sustainable

and responsible solutions. They are capable of reflecting critically on the cultural and social background of their own values.

## ii Open orientation

Educating these internationally oriented, academic professionals who have a sense of responsibility towards society calls for academic teaching from the University that is open to developments in the surrounding environment. For the University, this means adopting an active stance towards interaction with companies and organisations and with other sectors of society, and being open to technological and international developments. This environment includes a number of significant elements: the labour market, society in the Netherlands and beyond, technology and the international world.

### **Open to the labour market**

Students have signalled clearly that they want to have a stronger orientation towards the labour market. This has implications for our curricula and for the knowledge and skills that form their core. It calls for more focus on so-called ‘transferable skills’: academic, digital, intercultural, communication and social skills and competences such as leadership and entrepreneurship, skills that are applied in different situations and are not bound to a specific discipline. But it also calls for competences that are related to a particular profession, sector or discipline: non-transferable skills. To be able to incorporate transferable *and* nontransferable skills effectively into our current teaching requires good interaction with the environment around us, including that of the labour market. Partnerships with these parties – public organisations, companies, professional organisations and suchlike – can strengthen this interaction. Alumni and study associations can also play a key role in these collaborations.

### **Open to society**

Our teaching is directly connected with society. Developments in society have an immediate influence on our teaching, and over time our teaching has an important impact on society. This interaction can be shaped more directly through community projects with such bodies as schools, healthcare organisations and local councils, and by focusing attention on social innovation and social entrepreneurship. In order to give students the opportunity to develop into engaged and responsible citizens, it is important that the University encourages and supports such initiatives, even when they are not an integral part of the curriculum. Extraand co-curricular activities make a substantial contribution to students’ academic and personal development.

### **Open to technological changes**

We aim to align ourselves with the technological experience of today’s students. New technologies and new online providers are changing higher education and the way in which students participate in education. It is crucial that we respond to the changes in the professional field brought about by technological innovations such as big data, robotics and artificial intelligence. Students must be trained to adapt to the technological innovations that

will take place in their work. It is also crucial that new technologies are used to enrich the teaching process itself. New media and digital resources are ideal instruments to stimulate an active and inquisitive attitude on the part of students.

### **Open to a globalising world**

The interaction between education and its environment can no longer remain limited to the national landscape. Graduates must be able to place their knowledge in a European and global context; in their later lives they will communicate with international clients and colleagues and will increasingly collaborate and compete across borders. This obviously applies for our international students, but increasingly also for Dutch students who remain in the Netherlands. Such an approach calls for collaboration with international partners and opportunities for study and internships in other countries. It also calls for opportunities for co-curricular and extra-curricular activities with international partners and European and international organisations. This already takes place on a small scale, often at the initiative of enterprising students with an international outlook. To educate truly internationally and interculturally competent graduates, however, these opportunities have to be broadened and multiplied, starting by including comparative or global approaches to the relevant discipline in our teaching programmes and by exploiting the international diversity of our classrooms.

## **iii The curriculum**

Besides an open learning environment, the demands that Leiden University imposes on its graduates call for innovation in the teaching approach itself. The core of the proposed vision on teaching and learning is ‘integration of research and teaching’, or developing a critical, inquisitive and self-reflective attitude and the skills to make a systematic analysis of issues. This implies demands on how the University curriculum is structured, what is included in the curriculum and who plays which role. Integration of research and teaching enables graduates of Leiden University to critically assess academic and societal problems and to make well-informed choices in finding solutions for these problems. We will address the various issues shown in the diagram in more detail below.

### **Integration of research and teaching**

Leiden University firmly believes that research and teaching should be closely integrated, and we regard it as a core value that our teaching is inspired and fed by academic research.

*Research-based learning* or *inquiry-based learning* brings this a step closer by requiring our students to adopt an active, inquisitive attitude. Students are no longer merely observers; they become participants. As a consequence, research is not just the basis of our teaching, but is actually the very core of our teaching. This approach has a motivating effect on both students and lecturers.

Integration of research and teaching means asking the right questions, conducting research, interpreting results, developing arguments and communicating outcomes, all with the aim of understanding complex problems on the basis of logic and a solid scientific foundation. Integration of research and teaching implies a learning process in which students have a

strong influence on the teaching and in which they can make their own choices. The learning process calls for both good study skills and good research skills.

The University has chosen the integration of research and teaching as its core principle. This does not mean that Leiden only wants to educate academic researchers, but rather that we want all our graduates to have a curiosity-driven mindset and skills that can also be applied outside academia. Integration of research and teaching means that the teaching is inspired by academic research. It also means that research is used as a didactic instrument in our teaching and is incorporated as a learning pathway in the curriculum. Students have to be actively involved in the research. The way this is implemented will, of course, be different for the various disciplines.

Integration of research and teaching stimulates students to engage in co-creation in the educational process and teaches them such critical skills as independent working, critical thinking and problem solving. It also contributes to the further development of disciplinary knowledge and competences. It enables students to look for solutions for actual problems and to develop the leadership skills needed to tackle real-life problems and challenges.

This approach imposes particular demands on curricula and on teaching methods. It requires a form of active participation on the part of students, an emphasis on both knowledge and skills, and an adaptive programme in which students, guided by lecturers, can determine their own learning path.

### **Activating teaching and learning**

Involving students in teaching and research also means active learning by definition. This necessitates intensive, active education, in which students are the main focus, working together in groups and communities, both real and virtual. Students not only research existing questions, but also look for relevant questions themselves, facilitated, supported and motivated by their lecturers. Students take the initiative in the learning process and are consequently better prepared for their further study career (master's programme and possibly PhD) and are more challenged to contribute creative research questions.

Active participation by students requires our teaching to be structured differently. It has to focus less on the consumption of knowledge and move towards a smaller scale through more efficient use of contact hours. This calls for radical forms of 'flipping the classroom', where lectures and preparation are exchanged so that contact hours can be devoted to research, projects or discussions: lectures recorded on video are watched at home, while class hours are reserved for practice, research or discussion. The time that the lecturer spends with students can thus be used more effectively. Students feel more involved with their discipline and their programme because the learning process better reflects their wishes and their social environment. This in turn increases their enthusiasm to learn. Optimum use can be made of technological innovations to further strengthen this process of activation.

### **Flexible learning pathways**

In addition to active participation in education, a particular level of self-management by students is also required, while at the same time requiring the University to offer more flexibility and freedom in the curriculum. Students must be given the opportunity, guided by lecturers and study support staff, to choose the right path for themselves. The learning paths should reflect the questions raised by students. This does not mean, however, that students determine independently what mix of courses they will follow, but rather that they will work with the lecturers to map out a path that best matches their ambitions. The programme boards and lecturers will continue to be responsible for the quality of the learning paths. This can be in terms of the choice between disciplinary and interdisciplinary paths, and can also relate to options in the orientation towards the external environment (emphasis on the job market or profession, on society, technology or the world) in the form of the possibility of an internship, a community project, an online course or a research project or study abroad.

Different students have different areas of interest and different ambitions. The University therefore has to offer a range of different paths to make these ambitions possible. It also has the responsibility to offer, organise and evaluate participation in internships, community projects, summer schools and/or MOOCs. Not all students are satisfied with a predetermined learning path; many are looking for a personal academic experience. A University that can meet this requirement offers a clear added value.

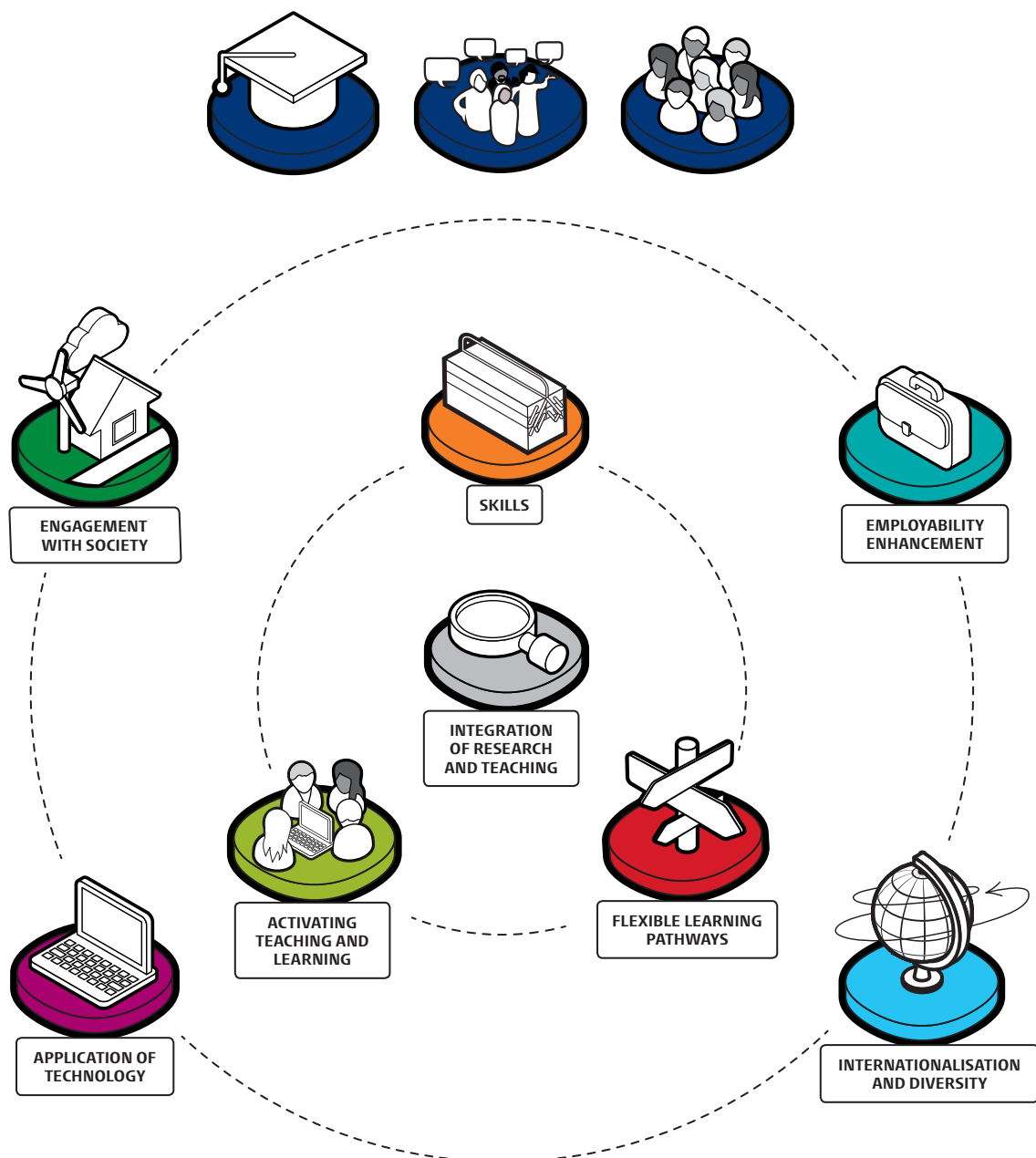
### **Skills**

To give substance to the academic and personal development of our students, the University not only needs to have the right knowledge at its disposal, but also has to encourage students to develop the right skills. These can be skills, such as academic, intercultural, digital, communication and social skills and competences such as leadership and entrepreneurship. At the same time, the non-transferable skills relating to specific disciplines also continue to play an important role.

The awareness that university education is about more than knowledge transfer is by now generally accepted. The question is *how* this skills teaching can be positioned effectively within the curriculum. In particular, integration of research and teaching offers ample opportunities for integrating non-transferable skills into the curriculum. Incorporating a continuous line of integration of research and teaching in the curriculum also provides the opportunity to address other skills. Many of the transferable and non-transferable skills will ultimately become part of the process.

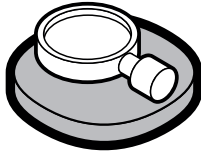
### Model summarising teaching and learning: Learning@LeidenUniversity

The above vision of our students, our teaching, the interaction with the environment and the didactic principles that are key to our programmes and curricula are summarised in the model below. It reflects what we are working towards (see the purple icons) and the demands we therefore make of the learning environment and the curriculum. Integration of research and teaching is the core of this model. With its focus on activating teaching and learning, its attention to broader competences and flexible learning pathways and an open attitude towards the world outside academia, the principles set out in this model can make an important contribution to educating academic and responsible professionals who are able to take a broad view and look beyond the borders of their own discipline.



## 4. Ambitions for an innovation agenda

To achieve this vision on teaching and learning, we propose the following eight ambitions and their associated actions. The first four relate to the students' immediate learning environment and the last four relate particularly to the orientation towards the external environment and the interaction with the university community and our students.



### **Ambition 1**

#### **Introducing 'integration of research and teaching' as a didactic concept in all programmes**

Each faculty will experiment with introducing the concept of 'integration of research and teaching'. This will entail more changes for some programmes than for others. Programmes that already work largely with this concept can serve as role models. The core of this didactic concept for Leiden still has to be developed further, and where necessary will be adapted to the different disciplines. ICLON, the University's Graduate School of Teaching can play a part in this process.



### **Ambition 2**

#### **Organising and facilitating small-scale learning communities in which students are active participants (active learning)**

Leiden students want teaching that both involves and motivates them. Students become a more active role in the learning process. Thanks to modern digital resources and a high-quality, interactive course content, students are able to prepare classes online. In these *flipped classrooms*, students work together in groups and learn via *peer teaching*. This allows lecturers to make effective use of class hours. Teaching is consequently more tailored to the specific requirements and is more motivating for both lecturers and students, and learning is more in depth. Classrooms and study facilities are designed such that they promote active and collaborative learning.



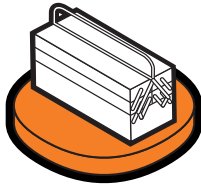
### **Ambition 3**

#### **More flexible learning pathways so that students have the flexibility to adapt their study career to their own individual goals**

The increasing diversity among students means that the University's teaching needs to adapt to the needs, capacities and wishes of different target groups. Students increasingly want to follow programmes that meet their own wishes and ambitions. Some students want to focus fully on a specific discipline, while others will prefer to make connections with other disciplines or will look for a more interdisciplinary approach, for example in the form of minors. One student may want to include an internship in his or her programme, while another will prefer to carry out a research project abroad.



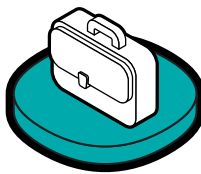
This diversity calls for greater flexibility in the curriculum, but it also requires greater interfaculty cooperation and more intensive supervision of students in planning their study career and setting their goals.



#### **Ambition 4**

**More focus on skills within the curriculum, preferably integrated and in a gradual and continuous learning pathway throughout the whole curriculum. The concept of ‘integration of research and teaching’ creates new opportunities for achieving this**

As well as the demand for knowledge and skills for a particular profession or discipline, there are calls – both from students and from employers – for more attention to be paid to skills. Tomorrow’s society needs people who are entrepreneurial and who can take initiative, who are situationally aware and internationally competent. They must be able to think critically and apply their expertise and knowledge creatively and flexibly to find solutions for complex problems. This requires an integrated and continuous approach, starting in the first year of the programme and continuing through to the final year.



#### **Ambition 5**

**Strengthening the orientation towards the job market**

Our teaching has to be more responsive to the new and future demands of the job market, and programme administrations will intensify the preparation for the job market in their teaching. This will require an individually tailored programme, in which students can work on the transition to the job market in different ways and at different stages of their programme. The teaching will include skills training, developing such competencies as leadership and entrepreneurship and exploring the work field, practical experience and contact with alumni and employers. Leiden University is intensifying its contact with employers and societal partners, a collaboration that will result in improved opportunities for Leiden students in terms of internships and jobs.



#### **Ambition 6**

**Strengthening the orientation towards society**

If we want our graduates to be engaged and responsible members of society, the link with society will also need to be strengthened in our teaching. The concept of ‘integration of research and teaching’ offers many opportunities to involve society more directly in our programmes. Research can be conducted jointly with societal partners or individuals. The current move towards ‘Citizen Science’ – where citizens play an active role in academic research – is an illustration of this. Students, too, can make an important contribution here. The connection with society can also take the form of participation in (or the organisation of) community projects. This can be as part of a particular course, but can also be a co-curricular or extra-curricular



experience, for example in line with the concept of ‘Service Learning’, where services to society are embedded in the teaching. The LUC Community Project on ‘Multicultural Education in The Hague’, carried out by students in partnership with two schools and The Hague City Council, is a good example of service learning. It also contributes directly to the development of academic and ‘non-transferable’ skills.



#### **Ambition 7**

##### **Strengthening the technological orientation in teaching and in the range of programmes**

Our teaching is facing the challenge of responding better to technological developments and at the same time incorporating technology more within the University environment. Programmes and courses have to develop an answer to the question of how technological innovations can change their discipline in terms of content or practice (technology as the *driver* of change). But it is also a matter of how technological innovations can contribute to the process of research-based learning and can activate our students (technology as the *enabler* of change). Programmes are developing online teaching as a means of accommodating students’ different study rates, learning styles, individually chosen tracks and entry levels. They recognise the MOOCs and online teaching offered by partner universities, thus enhancing the possibilities of virtual forms of mobility.



#### **Ambition 8**

##### **Strengthening the international orientation and the orientation towards diversity**

The strong international orientation that typifies teaching at Leiden University benefits the quality and employability of our graduates and makes the University more attractive for international students. We therefore work hard to create an international dimension within our programmes, for example by paying attention to cross-border or global problems and by introducing new perspectives and international comparative research. Our aim is to make active use of the diversity in our classrooms and to expand the opportunities for gaining international experience during the study programme. Creating an inclusive community, with both Dutch and international students with a wide range of identities and orientations, is a prerequisite for success. Parties such as study associations and student clubs also play a crucial role in achieving this ambition.

## 5. In conclusion

The vision on teaching and learning set out above embodies our ambitions for teaching at Leiden University in the future. It indicates how we want to educate our students and how we need to adapt our approach to teaching in order to achieve this. To realise the ambitions identified in this vision, we have to develop a focused, cohesive and long-term approach to educational innovation. In the coming years the University wants to realise this vision on the basis of a comprehensive innovation agenda. The model proposed should become clearly recognisable in the curricula of the various programmes and should ultimately be reflected in the satisfaction of students and staff, as well as in the quality and impact of Leiden University's graduates.





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