

STATEMENT: Quality of lecturers in university education

University education revolves around academic development. Lecturers stimulate critical thinking and problem-solving capacities in students, captivating and inspiring them on the basis of academic content. This content is continuously changing and under discussion. Lecturers are used to keeping abreast of the content of the subjects that they teach, following it critically and updating it. They are both experts in their subject content and role models for their students.

Lecturers face a number of specific educational challenges. They have a critical, intelligent and varied audience. The increasing number of entrants to university education means that the student population is becoming more and more diverse, with a range of international and cultural backgrounds, knowledge levels, motivations and ways of learning. Different forms of teaching also demand different didactic and other skills: giving lectures to hundreds of students does not require the same skills as coaching small tutorial groups in writing a paper or providing one-to-one supervision of a thesis.

There is a certain amount of international consensus on what lecturers must be able to do. This consensus frequently makes use of the Professional Standards Framework of the Higher Education Academy:¹

- developing, organising and carrying out teaching;
- coaching and supervising individual students;
- testing, assessing and giving feedback to students;
- evaluating and improving one's own teaching;
- incorporating developments in the subject area into the teaching programme.

Lecturers generally have a considerable research task alongside their teaching tasks. The two tasks require different competences, although there are also shared competences (an investigative attitude, for example). Good researchers are not automatically good teachers and vice versa. As a consequence, a great deal is expected of lecturers in a limited time.

The specific character of university education, where lecturers in their role of content expert and academic role model teach and carry out research, demands a style of didactic development of 'learning on the job'. Important factors are a strong connection between theory and practice as well as a working environment that invites the sharing of knowledge. Professionalisation of lecturers is the most effective if this fits in as much as possible with the needs and context of lecturers and if it takes place in interaction with academic practice.

An important component of the professionalisation of lecturers is the University Teaching Qualification (UTQ), which is mutually recognised by the Dutch universities. The UTQ programme consists of a customised didactic development stage, concluded by portfolio assessment: the lecturer is supervised – by a senior lecturer and/or educational trainer/consultant, for example – and learns and reflects in a teaching community. The lecturer takes courses and participates in training sessions within the field of didactics, puts what has been learnt into practice during his/her own teaching and compiles a portfolio. This portfolio generally contains a CV, supporting documents (such as teaching evaluations and sample courses and tests) and a reflection on the lecturer's own competences based on a nationally agreed profile of the lecturer. UTQ assessment is carried out by internal and external educational experts. On the one hand, the UTQ provides uniformity in the

¹ This framework can be found via <https://www.heacademy.ac.uk/ukpsf>.



competences that lecturers need to acquire and the way in which these competences are assessed. On the other hand, there is scope for each university to choose a specific implementation in order to align the qualification as much as possible with the profile of the institution and the requirements of course programmes and lecturers.

The professional development of lecturers does not come to an end after obtaining the UTQ, of course. Universities have various development paths and courses after the UTQ: specialist courses, individual coaching, peer consultation, the Senior (University) Teaching Qualification (STQ) and the educational leadership programme are examples of these follow-ups. The development and implementation of customised training options after the UTQ are well under way throughout the country. The universities' ownership of the UTQ has laid down the foundations for a greater valuation of the profession of teaching and for the continuing professional development of lecturers.