

## Press release

# Knowledge sector takes major step forward in new approach to recognising and rewarding academics

13 November 2019

*Today, the VSNU, NFU, KNAW, NWO and ZonMw are publishing the position paper 'Room for everyone's talent: towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards for academics' in which we indicate how we aim to more broadly recognise and reward the work of academic staff. This includes placing less emphasis on the number of publications, and a greater emphasis on the other domains in which the academic is active, such as education and impact. This broader form of recognition and appreciation is better suited to the current core tasks of knowledge and educational institutions and what society requires of these establishments.*

**Academics can excel in many areas, but thus far they have primarily been assessed based on research achievements. From now on, the public knowledge institutions and research funders want to consider academics' knowledge and expertise more broadly in determining career policy and grant requirements. In doing so, our aim is to ensure that the recognition and rewards system is better suited to the core tasks of the knowledge institutions in the areas of education, research, impact and patient care, and that the appreciation academics receive is better aligned with society's needs.**

A change is urgently needed in the way universities recognise and reward their academic staff. Research achievements have long determined academics' career paths, and this dominance is becoming increasingly at odds with reality. Education and impact are also crucial to the success of a modern knowledge institution, as is patient care for our university medical centres. New developments relating to Open Access and Open Science are placing different demands on modern-day academics as well. Tackling complex scientific and social issues requires greater collaboration. At the moment, there are still insufficient career prospects for staff who (in addition to doing good research) mainly excel in education. The emphasis on publication counts is inconsistent with the broader developments in academia. Rianne Letschert, rector magnificus of Maastricht University: 'We are expanding the current narrow definition of academic achievement and improving the recognition and rewards – and thus also the career prospects – for many people. We are additionally working to ensure a better balance between assessing individual performance and contributions within a team.' Frank Baaijens, rector magnificus of Eindhoven University of Technology: 'Attention and recognition for academic leadership is an essential part of these efforts. After all, the engaged leaders are the ones who attract and develop talent.'

### **Position paper**

With the publication of the position paper 'Room for everyone's talent: towards a new balance in the recognition and rewards for academics', the VSNU, KNAW, NFU, NWO and ZonMw are presenting concrete proposals to make more room for different academic talents and to recognise and reward academic work on all aspects that are relevant to our time. These plans include:

- From uniformity to diversity: we want to facilitate a wider variety of possible career paths and profiles, in order to recognise and reward a greater range of competences and talents and better align with the core tasks of the knowledge institutions and the challenges facing society.
- We want to offer more opportunities for collaboration, often across disciplinary boundaries in various financial instruments.
- In 2020, the universities will develop a national framework for assessment, development and promotion, and will implement the principles of the new recognition and rewards

framework in a recalibrated University Job Classification System (UFO), which is to enter into force in 2021.

- NWO and ZonMw are working on the further implementation of the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA) in their procedures and criteria. Bibliometric publication indicators will no longer be requested. The inclusion of research output on curricula vitae and application forms will take on a more narrative character.

### **Follow-up**

Modernising the system of recognition and rewards requires a culture change. Teamwork is a critical factor in this regard: a requirement in pursuing various career paths will be the ability to work with different team members to focus on education, research, impact and patient care. This will allow the tasks to be better aligned with team members' different qualities. Teams of academics are working within and, increasingly, between disciplines to tackle the major challenges in science and society. The announcement of the plans today marks an important step forward, but there is more work to be done. The acknowledgement and appreciation of academic staff has a strong impact in an international environment, so there is also much to be done outside the Netherlands. In the period ahead, the public knowledge institutions and research funders will continue to discuss this with academics as well. Jeroen Geurts, Board Chair of ZonMw: 'This is where we really start to put things in motion. The academics of 2030 will be interdisciplinary networkers who collaborate with numerous colleagues on a central problem. We need many different talents to achieve this, whom we will now truly acknowledge and appreciate.'

### **End of news item**

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#### **If you have any questions, please contact:**

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