

Framework for Teaching Performances at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

1. Introduction

Teaching is a key task of the university: it not only serves to train and educate young people, but also makes a significant contribution to society.

It is with this objective in mind that Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam wishes to teach students to become engaged and conscientious academics who are eager to explore and push the boundaries of their knowledge and beliefs.

Lecturers play an indispensable role in good-quality teaching, with the quality of teaching at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam being largely determined by the quality of its lecturers. Their ability to inspire students, their teaching skills, and their ability to situate their own subject within the larger context of the programme and society – and the ability to connect this with research – forms the basis of teaching at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. Ensuring these qualities according to the lecturer's WP position level is central to the staff policy that applies to lecturers within Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

The Philosophy on Education, which revolves around the four core values enshrined in the words 'open,' 'responsible,' 'personal,' and 'involved in society,' acts as a benchmark for teaching within Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam. 'Open' means providing the freedom for dialogue – both between lecturers as well as between lecturers and students – that is focused on academic insights and continuous academic development. 'Responsible' is about lecturers giving students constructive feedback, processing this, and being open to continuous professionalization, both individually and as part of a team. 'Personal' teaching entails teaching in which students and lecturers alike are free to voice their own opinions without risking adverse effects on their professionalism. 'Involved in society' implies that teaching is not only concentrated on the university itself, but also that this aspect is fostered for and with stakeholders outside academic education. In light of this, lecturers are members of an academic community in which the core values of 'open,' 'personal,' and 'responsible' ensure high-quality teaching performance.

Academics is distinguished by the connection it makes between teaching and research, which is why Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam wishes to establish an explicit connection between these two aspects in an academic career. Making a strict separation between teaching and research is not advisable in any WP position. Each academic, even an academic whose career focuses on teaching, must have a basis in research and maintain this basis throughout their career. Equally, it is impossible to have a career in academics without having demonstrable experience and proven competence in teaching. However, this does not mean that an individual staff member's teaching and research performance must be at the same level at all times in his or her career. For instance, the relationship between teaching and research tasks can vary in scope or weight. That said, an academic in permanent employment may not have exclusively teaching-focused or exclusively research-focused tasks, as Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam expects each academic to be proficient in both arts and therefore have both teaching and research capabilities. Every position has an absolute minimum performance level for both teaching and research. However, the level of teaching and research performances can vary in relation to each other, allowing for the performance level in one area to be compensated by the performance level in the other.

The WP careers policy pursues the equal recognition and assessment of academics, be that in teaching or research. Both internal careers incentives and external ones such as NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) place their primary focus on developing academics' research. The quality and impact of an academic's publications and their ability to attract investments in a research budget are leading indicators of a successful academic career. By placing more emphasis than is currently the case in the WP careers policy on teaching performances, as is being done in this framework, Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam is improving the visibility and the career prospects of people who focus their career on the provision of teaching in a broad sense and on ensuring the quality of this teaching.

This shift of focus will balance out the attention given to teaching and research in an academic career, in turn assigning more importance to the quality of teaching.

This teaching framework has three objectives:

1. To improve the acknowledgement and visibility of teaching and teaching performances in the academic career of academics who are dedicated to providing good-quality teaching;
2. To support the professional development of academics with regards to teaching by describing this development and the required training in the different phases of their career;
3. To improve the career prospects for people who dedicate their career to ensuring that teaching is of good quality, that there are innovations in teaching, and that solutions are found to deficiencies within teaching, right up to the highest level in the organization.

2. The aim of the framework

The teaching framework is a tool used to recognize a person's progression and performance with regards to teaching, as well as to monitor these two aspects and make them transparent. This will enable academics and their supervisors to make clear agreements regarding personal development processes. On a programme and departmental level, the framework can be used to map out the teaching expertise in the body of teaching staff.

A lecturer's career develops according to three main principles:

1. the increase of his or her expertise in teaching, their own subject, and discipline;
2. his or her growing contribution to innovation, development, and quality assurance in terms of teaching;
3. an increase in the number of his or her tasks and responsibilities with regards to teaching.

The framework describes these according to five core activities, namely:

- A. Teaching performance
- B. Teaching content
- C. Degree of expertise
- D. The contribution to the educational organization
- E. Quality assurance

The academic's current level in teaching can be determined according to the nature and scope of these activities. At the same time, it becomes clear which points require improvement.

In relation to the level achieved in the aforementioned activities A to E, column two specifies the stage at which the lecturer finds himself or herself in his or her career, which formal roles he or she may fulfil at this level, as well as the nature of the career development (including training) at this level. Finally, the framework also specifies how the lecturer (column three) is expected to behave in a professional sense with respect to his or her position on the career ladder.

The framework describes four 'lecturer levels': junior, middle, senior, and expert.

The activities described and the degree of professionalization are usually of a cumulative nature, meaning that what is described at a lower level is still applicable to the lecturer's level at that moment in time. However, this does not mean that all activities need to be mentioned; it may concern an activity which the lecturer was working on in the past

A distinction is made between 'career phases' and 'career development'. The former indicates the position of the lecturers on the educational ladder, whereas the latter gives an insight into what is required in order to climb this ladder.

3. Teaching versus research in an academic career

The teaching framework specifically describes the academic's career development in terms of teaching during his or her academic career. However, teaching and research – and similarly valorization – are integral to an academic career, and performances in both areas therefore play a decisive role in the progression of an academic's career.

Describing teaching performances during a career increases the visibility of teaching as a component of a WP career, thereby preventing a situation in which the quality of teaching and the contribution to teaching by default play a subordinate role in an academic career. Nevertheless, the framework will continually focus on the connection between teaching and research as well as the connection to developments within an academic's own subject area.

Within an individual WP career, it is often the case that experience, performance, and training with respect to teaching and research (and the time dedicated to these two areas) are unequally distributed. For instance, an academic may well be an experienced researcher with a large number of publications in his or her name, yet have limited experience in the field of education. And the opposite can also be true.

This explains why the junior, middle, senior, and expert levels featured in the chart in the annex to this framework are connected to the UFO-profiles for WP as well as to the results areas of teaching and research. This has two benefits: it facilitates the monitoring of relative teaching and research levels during an academic's career and also provides a better indication of when this career is leaning more toward teaching or research. It is worth noting that, ultimately, academics are not obliged to choose between a teaching-focused or research-focused career, as a combination is still possible up to the highest position level. Alongside this, the possibility of a focus shift during the lecturer's career may mean that some periods are more concentrated on teaching or research.

CHARACTERISTICS

A TEACHING PERFORMANCE

- Applies proven teaching methods in the teaching of predominantly homogeneous groups.
- Utilizes subject-specific knowledge and knowledge of teaching methodology in connection with educational objectives.
- Tests and assesses learning results using developed assessment methods.

B TEACHING CONTENT

- Plays an active role together with the responsible teacher in deciding how the subject is taught.

C EXPERTISE

- Has knowledge equivalent to Master's level of the subject area in which he/she gives lectures.
- Is able to contextualize his/her own subject within the programme of study and recognize its relation to other subjects.

D EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

- Actively takes part in education-related meetings.

E QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Draws attention to areas of improvement in teaching and specifies these during meetings with the responsible teacher.

CAREER

CAREER PHASE

- A junior teacher is a beginning teacher at the start of his/her career as a teacher¹.
- The corresponding job profiles are: fourth teacher, PhD student, post-doctorate², and visiting teachers with limited teaching tasks.

FORMAL ROLE

None

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Develops to middle-level lectureship through an accumulation of experience, support, and training.
- Provides support to middle and senior teachers.
- Is responsible for other tasks such as organizing working weeks, project weeks, etc.

TRAINING

- Has obtained at least Master's level in the subject area in which he/she gives lectures.
- Has completed the basic course 'Uitvoeren van Onderwijs' (as part of the BKO programme) within the first six months of starting his/her lectureship.
- Begins the remaining part or all of the BKO within one year.
Please note: PhD students may follow part or all of the BKO programme as part of their 30 ECTS training right.

PROFESSIONALISM

PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

- Begins to develop his/her own ideas about the subject area.
- Can formulate the views about teachers and students upon which the working method is based and what is considered important in this.
- Is able to reflect on his/her own teaching: he/she can identify his/her strong and weak points, can formulate teaching issues, and is able to methodically work on this in a personal development plan.
- Is able to systematically reflect on his/her own experiences and can find solutions to problems in his/her own practice.
- Can evaluate his/her own approach and present this to colleagues.
- Is open to feedback from colleagues.
- Can kindle students' enthusiasm.
- Can react properly to student feedback and process this.

¹ This explicitly involves the beginning phase of the teaching component of somebody's career. It is entirely possible that somebody giving their first lecture is no longer considered 'junior' in the research component of their career. COPYRIGHT VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED.

² The UFO profile referred to is: third or fourth researcher

CHARACTERISTICS

A TEACHING PERFORMANCE

- Is able to implement, within certain teaching forms and situations, a teaching programme in which students are encouraged to accumulate knowledge, insights, skills, and/or competences.
- Is aware of the range of approaches available and able to fulfil the requisite range of teaching roles, such as role model, supervisor, and feedback provider.
- Makes effective use of more complex teaching skills.
- Tests and assesses learning results and analyses outcomes.
- Is able to apply different and new assessment methods.
- Contributes to the development of students' attitude to academic study and research.

B TEACHING CONTENT

- Is able to further develop – within a set framework – a fruitful learning environment and associated course-level teaching programme.
- Is able to justify the choices of the various design components in education with reference to theory, experiences, evaluations, and comments from colleagues.
- Effectively coordinates learning objectives, subject content, and assessment procedures with one another within the wider context of the programme of study.

C EXPERTISE

- Has Master's-level knowledge of the subject area in which he/she gives lectures and has extensive knowledge of branches in the subject area.
- Is able to justify the choices he/she makes in organizing the teaching programme with reference to various working contexts.
- Can keep an overview of the relationship between a change in education and the resulting impact on the current programme of study.
- Stays informed of the latest developments in his/her own subject area.

D EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

- Contributes to the organization of teaching as well as formulations to the teaching policy.
- Gives shape to the programme of study as a whole.
- Works well with colleagues.
- Ensures that teaching tasks are carried out properly and in a timely fashion.
- Supports junior teachers in teaching and contributes to the development of junior colleagues' reflection on teaching.

E QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Works systematically, purposefully, and visibly on the effectiveness of teaching and maximizing the students' studying achievements. Assess the quality of his/her own teaching using the PCDA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle at course level.

CAREER

CAREER PHASE

- Has ample experience in giving shape to and implementing teaching independently.
- Usually has three to five years of teaching experience.
- Carries out additional activities within his/her position and scope of his/her job, such as supporting junior teachers and carrying out organizational matters related to teaching.
- Corresponding job profiles: third teacher, second senior university teacher

FORMAL ROLES

Depending on his/her position and experience, a middle teacher can take on the following roles:

- Member of the department-level teaching work groups
- Member of the programme committee
- Member of the Examination Board
- Year group coordinator

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In this phase, he/she transitions from a middle-level to a senior-level teacher by increasing his/her subject knowledge, accumulating experience, and receiving support and training.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Holder of a doctor's degree, preferably in the subject area in which he/she will lecture
- Holder of the BKO qualification, possibly with additional courses

PROFESSIONALISM

PROFESSENELE HOUDING

- Works methodically in developing solutions, not only in his/her own immediate field of practice, but also in a broader sense such as in the programme of study.
- Can plan and justify his/her own development.
- Is able to formulate his/her own training needs and acquire new knowledge and skills on his/her own initiative.
- Reflects on his/her own actions and experiences in professional practice and incorporates this into teaching.
- Is eager to learn and requests feedback on his/her approach.
- Draws attention to relevant developments and situates these in the context of his/her own development.
- Takes advantage of additional opportunities to develop himself/herself with respect to teaching, such as by reading professional literature, attending conferences, and participating in training.
- Participates in projects to innovate teaching and takes the initiative in developing new tasks.
- Kindles the enthusiasm of students and is able to bring individual students' attention to their qualities and talents.
- Encourages and involves junior teachers in designing, redesigning, and implementing teaching.

CHARACTERISTICS

A TEACHING PERFORMANCE

- Has credible teaching skills that are based on his/her knowledge, vision, and experience.
- Possesses excellent knowledge of a large repertoire of working and assessment methods and is therefore able to give individualized lectures.
- Has a solid vision of good teaching, possesses knowledge of current developments in the area of teaching, and experiments with new methods of teaching and assessment.
- Is largely responsible for implementing and assessing teaching.

B TEACHING CONTENT

- Develops teaching that is innovative in terms of its content and teaching style.
- Shapes and monitors the programme of study in general.
- Investigates the real and possible effects of improvements in the programme of study and assessment, making well-reasoned choices for the design and redesign of teaching on the basis of his/her findings.

C EXPERTISE

- Has a deep understanding of the whole subject area and/or specialist knowledge of sub-areas.
- Is able to formulate a vision of his/her own subject area and contextualize this.
- Keeps informed of new developments in his/her own subject area, taking these as the basis of improvements and/or innovations in teaching.
- Systematically follows the impact of new teaching methods.
- Is able to direct initiatives in extension to the above-mentioned points.
- Justifies and gives reasoning for choices made on a non-course specific level.
- Monitors the relation and required coordination between teaching activities in different teams.
- Is able to play an active role in writing up a critical discussion document for the programme.

D EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

- Has a large amount of responsibility for the organization of teaching and plays an active role in giving shape to teaching policy.
- Supports junior and/or middle teachers in implementing teaching and promotes colleagues' development and reflection on tasks.
- Plays an active role in and/or guides faculty committees and/or projects and project groups.
- Is able to keep a clear head when faced with different interests and opinions and can effectively deal with opposition.

E KWALITEITSZORG

- Using the PCDA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, he/she monitors, maintains, assesses, and promotes the quality of teaching provision and assessment on a non-subject specific level.

CAREER

LOOPBAANFASE

- Is a very experienced teacher at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam with well-developed lecturing and organizational qualities.
- Usually has five to ten years of teaching experience.
- Corresponding job profiles: first and second teacher, Senior Teacher, first and second senior university teacher

FORMELE ROLLEN

Depending on his/her position and experience, a senior teacher can take on the following roles:

- President of faculty-level teaching work groups
- Member of faculty-level teaching work groups
- President of the programme committee
- President of the Examinations Board
- Minor coordinator
- Director of Education

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

In this phase, the senior teacher develops into an expert in his/her own subject area. Depending on his/her position and scope of responsibility, the senior lecturer is responsible for tasks relating to teaching methodology, assessment, educational organization, and training and supporting senior teachers.

In terms of teaching, the career of a senior teacher can develop in two directions:

Specialist in teaching methodology

- Has excellent skills when it comes to both developing and implementing teaching.
- Is a recognized specialist in subject and educational development. In addition to this, he/she is an inspiration to students and an example to fellow teachers.

Innovator of teaching

- Has highly developed innovative qualities.
- Has a clear and solid vision of good teaching.
- Is able to connect and motivate teachers around common objectives.
- Has a pioneering role when it comes to improving activities, approaches, and materials within a department or programme.
- Contributes to developing and innovating teaching.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

- Holder of a doctor's degree, preferably in the subject area in which he/she will lecture.
- Specialist in teaching methodology: possesses the SKO qualification³, possibly complemented with 'Leergang Onderwijskundig Leiderschap' (education-related leadership course).
- Innovator of teaching: possesses SKO qualification, possibly complemented with 'Leergang Onderwijskundig Leiderschap' (education-related leadership course [LOL]).

PROFESSIONALISM

PROFESSENELE HOUDING

- See: 'middle teacher'
- Justifies and provides reasoning for choices made on a non-course specific level.
- Reflects on his/her own actions and strives to develop himself/herself both professionally and personally.
- Actively involves and encourages others (both on junior and middle level) in designing, redesigning, assessing, and implementing teaching.
- Kindles students' enthusiasm across all fields in his/her subject area.

³ Please note: the SKO qualification is pending evaluation and the associated regulations are yet to be formally laid down. We are aiming to have this completed by autumn 2015 at the latest.

CHARACTERISTICS

A IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATION

- Has proven teaching abilities.
- Is ultimately responsible for implementing and assessing teaching.

B TEACHING CONTENT

- Is able to shape, implement, and have implemented practical solutions to complex issues relating to teaching and content.
- Is ultimately responsible for the logical structuring of a complete Bachelor's or Master's programme design in terms of content and form within his/her own subject area.

C EXPERTISE

- Has knowledge of the whole programme and also possesses specialist knowledge in his/her own sub-field, which he/she is able connect to other subject areas and/or programmes.
- Is a recognized expert in educational development with regards to subject content and teaching.
- Can produce effective problem analyses of complex teaching-related issues.
- Recognizes the effects of new teaching methods, both internally and externally, and uses this knowledge as a basis to initiate and manage developments in policy on a programme, faculty, or university level as a whole.

D EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION

- Is ultimately responsible for the organization of teaching, as well as the shaping and formulation of teaching policy on a programme or faculty level.
- Actively and noticeably supports and stimulates the development of teaching and lectureship.
- Supports and provides general and functional supervision to seminars and project groups on a faculty and university level, and in doing so acts as President.
- Embodies the faculty and, by virtue of his/her attitude and behaviour, contributes to the development of a professional teaching culture.

E QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Is ultimately responsible for the PCDA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle on a programme and faculty level.
- Uses the PCDA cycle to improve teaching on a programme level and in terms of the programme of study.
- Aside from formal cycles, he/she monitors the quality of teaching performances in a broad sense and takes action where required.

CAREER

CAREER PHASE

- Is a very experienced, effective teacher as well as an important player with a strategic role in teaching policy at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.
- Is a recognized expert in educational development.
- Has highly developed teaching and leadership qualities and is able to carry through innovations and progress beyond his/her own department or faculty.
- Usually has at least five years of experience at senior level.
- Corresponding job profiles: first senior university teacher, Full Professor

FORMAL ROLES

Alongside his/her formal roles at senior level, an expert may take on the following roles depending on his/her experience and position:

- President of teaching work groups on a faculty and/or university level
- President of the programme committee
- President of the Examinations Board
- Director of Studies
- University Board member for Education

CAREER DEVELOPMENT

- Switches foci within the tripartite structure of education-research-management in order to foster continuous development.

TRAINING

- Holder of a doctorate degree, preferably in the subject area in which he/she will lecture.
- Is in possession of a SKO qualification and has also followed the course Leergang Onderwijskundig Leiderschap (education-related leadership course).

PROFESSIONALISM

PROFESSIONAL ATTITUDE

- See: senior teacher
- Continuously and noticeably reflects on own actions.
- Focuses on the possibilities and opportunities to develop others and acts accordingly.
- Feels responsible for the quality of the faculty's teaching.
- Maintains an overview so as to discern and make connections between developments in teaching and research.
- Fosters teamwork amongst teachers and community building around teaching within and outside his/her own faculty.
- Embodies the faculty in its internal and external affairs.
- Kindles students' enthusiasm in the aforementioned role.