



university of
 groningen

Think Bold.

University of Groningen Strategic Plan 2015-2020





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Foreword

The University of Groningen is an ambitious international research university with strong roots in the north of the Netherlands. The University creates and shares knowledge through its outstanding research, scholarship and education. With an academic tradition dating back to 1614 and a rich heritage, the University is a unique academic community with a strong sense of belonging and a culture of innovative education and research.



Research and teaching at the University of Groningen are curiosity driven and relate closely to global societal needs. The research is based on strong core disciplines.

In Groningen, we believe that exceptional teaching and research depend on a diverse academic community with a broad range of nationalities and talents. Research, societal impact and education are closely intertwined at the University, and are set against a backdrop of academic freedom. We thus enable our students to become active, independent, critical and responsible global citizens who will help solve the scientific and societal challenges of tomorrow.

The following six ambitions for 2020 derive from this vision and are central to our strategy:

1. The University of Groningen will consolidate its position as an international academic community with strong local roots. One of our activities to achieve this is to establish national and international branch campuses¹. In this international setting, research and education will benefit from the diverse perspectives and approaches necessary to solve the big questions and challenges faced by society.
2. We will help our researchers work on new, high risk ideas by fostering an innovative and entrepreneurial attitude. Fundamental disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research with strong international partners together with innovative interaction with society will be central to the research-driven education that we provide.
3. We expect our students to be committed and responsible participants in the teaching and learning processes. Enabling our students to be active learners is therefore the focus of our educational strategy.
4. Putting knowledge to use is a key responsibility of the University. The dissemination of knowledge and converting this knowledge into sustainable economic and societal processes, services and business activities will be a cornerstone of University strategy.
5. We acknowledge a shared responsibility for University strategy, management and operation and this is reflected in a continuous process of discussion and negotiation with staff and students about the future of our institution. Trust forms the basis of this process, as does the recognition of the different formal roles within the process. Accountability and transparency with regard to quality and funding are fundamental in this respect.
6. Our alumni are our most important connection to society and we welcome their involvement in our education and research through their contributions in the alumni circles and various other activities.

With this strategy for 2020, the University of Groningen is confident that it can continue and grow in its role as a prestigious international research university in the next five years.



¹ for instance: University of Groningen/Campus Fryslân in Leeuwarden, University of Groningen/Campus Yantai

Mission

The University of Groningen is an ambitious international research university with strong roots in the north of the Netherlands. The University creates and shares knowledge through outstanding research and education, and thus benefits society.

Vision

The University of Groningen is an international academic community in which disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research leads to scientific breakthroughs and societal innovation, and in which talented students are trained as innovators who will contribute to a sustainable society. Its research and education are driven by intrinsic curiosity and interaction with global society. As a result, research, education and processes that have a societal impact are closely intertwined at the University.

Our research, which is of the highest standing, is based on strong core disciplines and a critical mass of researchers. These strong core disciplines are the foundation of our cross-disciplinary research. Our research in these core disciplines and our cross-disciplinary research help us to both deepen our fundamental understanding and knowledge of the world and find innovative answers to today's societal challenges. Understanding the world and putting this knowledge to use are two key responsibilities.

With these responsibilities in mind, we actively engage in the dissemination of knowledge and converting this knowledge into economic and societal value. We do this with an emphasis on our three research priorities – healthy ageing, energy and sustainable society – and with a specific focus on the needs of the Northern Netherlands. Due to their political and economic constellation, the northern provinces provide us with a unique environment for innovative research on the global societal challenges, and in return the University provides a window on the world for the North of the Netherlands.

We want our students to become active, independent, and responsible citizens who can think critically and help solve the scientific and societal challenges of today and become the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. To achieve this goal we aim at small-scale teaching and focus on establishing strong links between students and staff, between teaching and research, and between teaching and relevant social issues in national and international contexts.

Exceptional teaching and research are only feasible with a diverse perspective on teaching and research and a university community encompassing different talents and nationalities. We achieve this by establishing a setting in which talent is recognized and can blossom. In keeping with the University's ambitions, talented staff and students from all over the world are attracted by the career prospects and challenging study programmes. Moreover, they are given ample opportunity to apply, train and develop their specific strengths. Our university thus delivers a knowledgeable workforce that can make a significant contribution to a deeper understanding of the world and solving the challenges it presents. We believe that it is important to keep in touch with our alumni around the globe and to enable them to contribute to the mission of the university



Values

Introduction

Our core values define our university culture. They guide how we reach decisions and how our staff, students and stakeholders work together.



Academic freedom

Research and education take place in a climate of freedom of opinion and expression.

“The right, without constriction by prescribed doctrine, to freedom of teaching and discussion, freedom in carrying out research and disseminating and publishing the results thereof, freedom to express freely their opinion about the institution or system in which they work, freedom from institutional censorship and freedom to participate in professional or representative academic bodies².”

Integrity

Integrity forms the basis of our actions. Integrity here translates into honesty, openness and transparency in our methods and reports, and is the foundation of our research and teaching. Integrity and academic freedom go hand in hand.

Diversity and social inclusion

Diversity is an important aspect of academic success, and we embrace it by valuing and respecting the perspectives and contributions of all our staff and students, and stimulating a sense of connection in an inclusive academic community. By continuous interaction with staff and students and their participation in our governance, university wide commitment to university strategies and policies is realized.

Innovation and openness

We continuously strive to improve in everything we do. We are receptive to new ideas and seek to increase our knowledge of unfamiliar fields. We operate internationally to expose ourselves to different views and approaches, and are keen to initiate contacts and build relationships with new people. Open Access, Open Research and Open Data are important strategies for realizing these goals. They help us achieve excellence in research, education and societal impact.

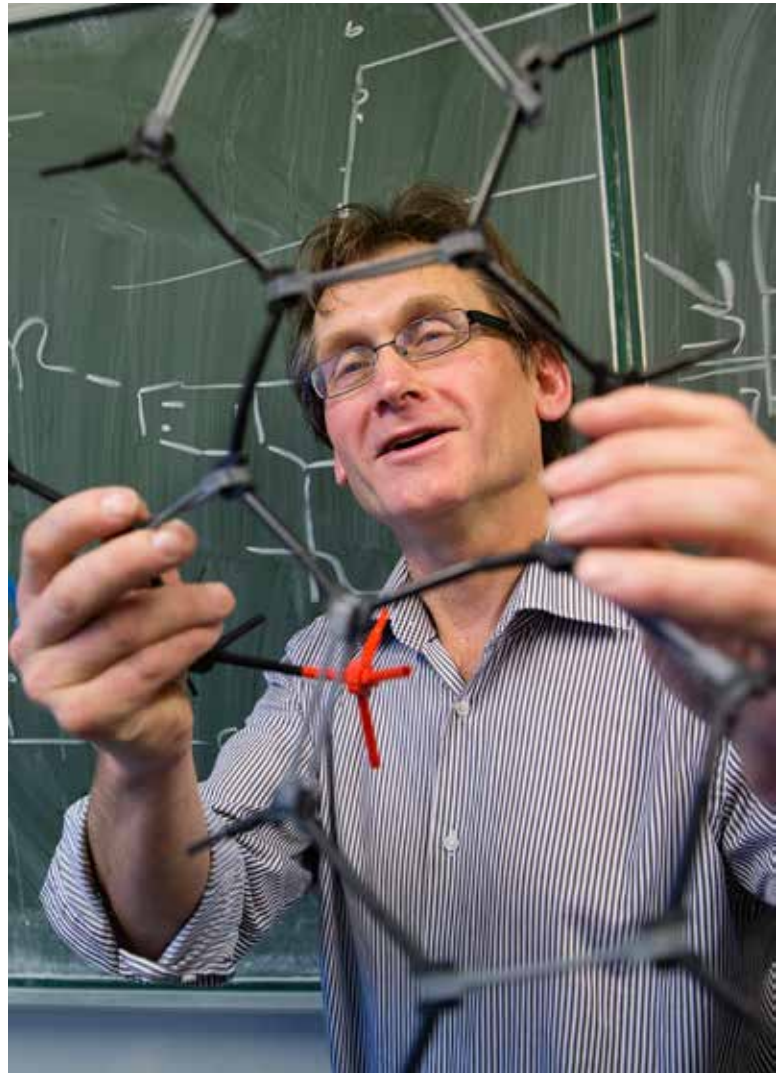
² see: UNESCO, *Recommendation Concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel* (1997), para 27.

Accountability

Our credibility is built on our values with regard to innovation, inclusion and integrity and the way we operate to find answers to the societal challenges of today. This is reinforced by our commitment as a public organization to be accountable for and transparent about all our actions.

Sustainability

We integrate sustainability and responsible behaviour consequently in our teaching, research and administration. We believe that through cooperation between our students, staff and other leading partners in sustainability the university can have a true impact in creating a circular economy and a sustainable society.



Strategic goals

Research, education, societal impact and talent development are essential to achieving our mission and vision. Research and education have always been the University's *raison d'être*; societal impact and talent development, although an inherent part of research and teaching, have recently been made a more explicit aspect of the University's activities. If it is to fulfil its task here, the University needs to perform on regional, national and international levels. Although this presents opportunities, the competition is fierce, especially in the national and international fields. Furthermore, if we are to consolidate or preferably improve our position in the global academic world, we will need to perform and become even better in the four areas of research, education, societal impact and talent development. Our strategic objectives, as stated in the following sections, are therefore geared towards improvement in these areas. This is combined with global expansion in the shape of (inter)national branch campuses that should consolidate our education and research.

Achieving the strategic objectives will involve launching new initiatives and most likely revising, reducing or terminating existing ones.

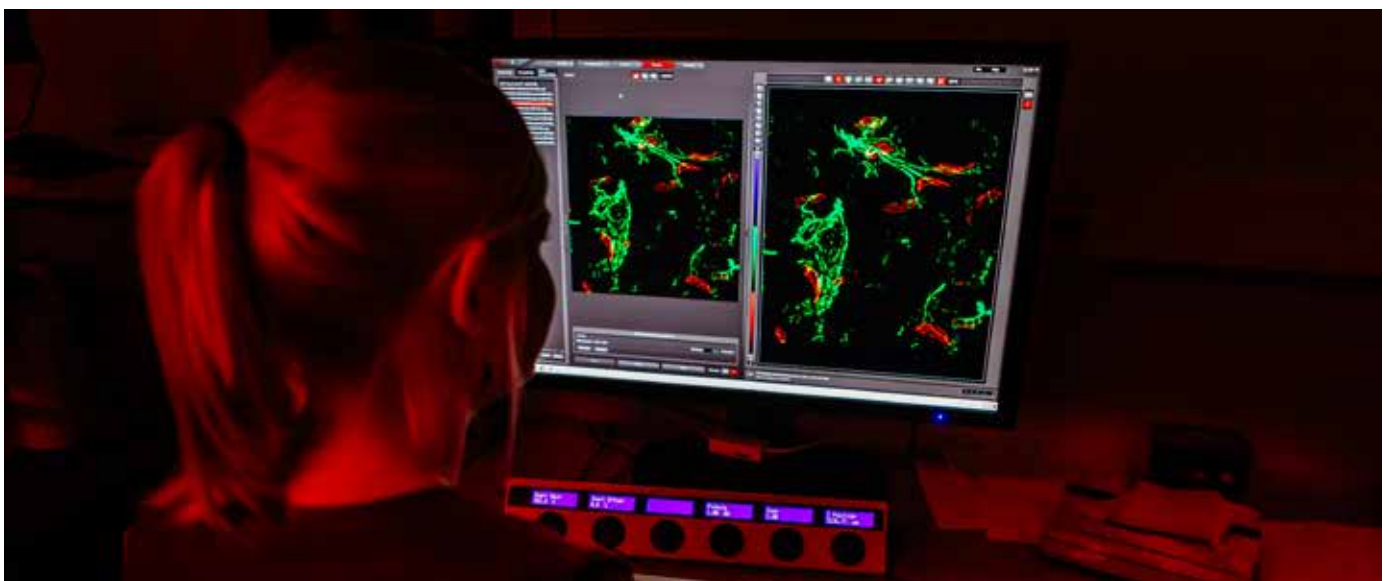
Research

Current situation

The University of Groningen has a strong international reputation for its research. This is reflected in our position in international ranking lists. Our Zernike Institute of Advanced Materials is one of the top two research schools in the Netherlands and we participate in the other one, the Netherlands Research School for Astronomy. Our investment in international interdisciplinary research has resulted in highly esteemed research institutes and groups such as the European Research Institute for the Biology of Ageing, the Centre for Synthetic Biology and the Willem Barentsz Polar Institute. Moreover, the University is home to many ERC laureates. Since 2007, over 25 Starting Grants, nine Advanced Grants and four Proof of Concept grants have been awarded to our academics. This places the University of Groningen at the top of the ERC funding list in the Netherlands and among the top universities in Europe.

Vision

Our outstanding research is based on strong core disciplines with a critical mass of researchers. Sufficient critical mass ensures a creative and critical environment in which new ideas can be validated and young talent can flourish. Moreover, strong core disciplines are necessary for cross-disciplinary research. Cross-disciplinary research is crucial not only to fundamental insights but also for finding innovative solutions to today's societal challenges. As a university, it is our responsibility to contribute solve these challenges. We therefore pay particular attention to the fundamental questions that also relate to the Northern Netherlands, such as how



to realize sustainable rural communities when faced with a decreasing and ageing population, which factors and solutions affect healthy ageing, how to address the diverse problems caused by gas extraction, and what are the alternative and preferably sustainable energy sources of the future.

In order to deepen our understanding of the world while addressing these challenges, we will create an environment that stimulates fundamental disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research and enables researchers to realize their full potential. Three key elements are crucial here. The first is a diverse, international setting. If we are to make optimal use of all available research talent, a diverse composition of our research teams is almost a prerequisite. It helps us to achieve different perspectives and approaches that in turn will help us to generate new knowledge and solve fundamental questions. The second is the optimal use of IT. An up-to-date IT infrastructure is indispensable to support us to deepen our understanding of the world. Modern science cannot do without high-performance computing and the ability to handle big data. These will continue to change scientific approaches to fundamental questions, and allow us to see these questions in a broader and transdisciplinary context. The third element is fostering an entrepreneurial attitude, which means supporting researchers on new high-risk ideas and enabling them to enter into strategic partnerships.



Aim

It is our aim to become one of the top 25 European universities in fundamental disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research and to contribute significantly to technological, medical, social and cultural progress. Our research is driven by intrinsic curiosity and innovative interaction with society, and is performed in our state-of-the-art facilities. It harnesses the potential of our talented young researchers and is transferred to students in research-driven education.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

- strengthen our ground-breaking fundamental research base
- continue to invest in fundamental research related to our research priorities of healthy ageing, energy and sustainable society
- stimulate emerging areas of research across the boundaries of disciplines
- create a transparent and well-facilitated research environment

Strategies

We will strengthen our excellent fundamental research base and the fundamental research that relates to our research priorities by raising the profile of the relevant research programmes and expertise. Moreover, we will optimize the critical mass of research staff through aggregation and collaboration in local and international settings such as international branch campuses. Furthermore, we will put extra effort into shaping and securing strategic partnerships with academia, local industry and research funders, and strengthen our engineering research to enable us to realize proof of concepts in industry.

In order to stimulate research across the boundaries of disciplines we will create an infrastructure, in terms of facilities and funding, that enables research staff from different disciplines to meet and initiate this type of research project.

The disciplinary and cross-disciplinary research will be supported by an up-to-date IT infrastructure and an intensified E-science effort. Furthermore, we will actively stimulate and facilitate a transparent environment by implementing and practising the principles of Open Research, Open Data and Open Access in our academic community.

Education

Current situation

With regard to teaching strategies and the teaching environment, continuous optimization and innovation are essential if we are to meet future demands in a rapidly changing global society. Building on its long tradition of high quality education and pioneering innovation, the University of Groningen has therefore revolutionized its teaching in recent years. We have successfully piloted state-of-the-art educational concepts such as research-driven education, communities of learners, the international classroom and e-learning, and these are now being implemented. This has significantly improved study results and increased student satisfaction.

Vision

We strive to develop the full potential of young people so that they can shape the world of tomorrow as independent and responsible members of society, who think critically, function at an academic level and apply knowledge in a meaningful way.

In order to achieve this, our educational vision focuses on establishing strong links between students and staff, between teaching and research and between teaching and relevant social issues in national and international contexts. We believe that talent and potential flourish most in a close-knit academic community that imparts, generates, exchanges and integrates knowledge, a community that inspires its members to develop their academic knowledge, interests and talents to the full.

As this is an international university, it requires an international educational programme and an academic and social environment in which cultural differences between staff and students serve as an opportunity to learn from each other. This enables staff and students to develop their full potential, collaborate in a committed and respectful way and make a responsible contribution to academia and society.

Our vision of teaching and learning rests on the assumption that the acquisition of knowledge and skills is primarily the result of optimal interaction between staff and students that enables students to become active and responsible participants in their own learning process. Our educational strategy focuses on prompting students to become respected participants in our academic community. Learning is therefore an activity that takes place in context, as an interplay between lecturer and student that focuses on learning to know, learning to do, learning to live together and learning to be.³ Inspired guidance familiarizes students with the shared knowledge base of their discipline, so that they build on and extend the knowledge gleaned from their own experiences, perspectives and backgrounds



³ UNESCO Delors Report: the four pillars of learning.

Aim

Our aim is to impart to students the values, skills and knowledge that they need in order to become the next generation of independent and responsible leaders, innovators, academics and professionals around the world who can also think critically. In order to accomplish this, we teach them in a challenging environment that focuses on personal development and ambition as well as creativity, entrepreneurial spirit and a mutual commitment to excellence. It is inspired by leading current research, highly motivated lecturers and relevant social issues in national and international contexts.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

- create an academic and social environment in which students are actively involved in their own education process and in which learning and personal talent development take centre stage
- exchange, generate and integrate knowledge in an innovative, close-knit academic community in which excellent teaching and motivated learning are highly valued
- provide first-class teaching that is based on our research strengths and gives students the opportunity to study and work at the forefront of knowledge
- intensify the international nature of our academic community in order to enable students and staff to collaborate with and learn from people from different cultural backgrounds and thus take a global perspective
- impart to students the necessary skills, attitudes and knowledge that they will need to compete successfully in the global labour market

Strategies

In order to create the intended environment and community we will set high standards for both our students and ourselves, and will subsequently reward not only excellent students but also excellent staff. Our staff and students will be encouraged to develop and evaluate innovative forms of teaching such as e-learning and the flipped classroom in order to ensure we stay up to date. Our faculties, departments and lecturers will be encouraged to work together for the benefit of our students and to develop coherent, effective and interdisciplinary methods of course unit delivery. Moreover, we will continue to strengthen our academic community by using learning communities throughout the University.

Our teaching will be research-driven at both Bachelor's and Master's levels to ensure that students become a real part of our academic community while at the same time being introduced to the forefront of science and technology. We will continue to focus on our research strengths and priorities in our Master's programmes in particular. Our graduates will thus be highly sought-after specialists in their chosen areas of expertise and able to help solve the societal issues of today and tomorrow.

The continuing diversity of our academic population is warmly welcomed. We will provide an international perspective by applying the international classroom concept, which introduces students to diverse perspectives and uses international examples to illustrate topics. The introduction of one or more international branch campuses, and to expand and intensify on our present international partnerships, will further internationalize and strengthen our academic community.

In order to equip students with the competences they need, we will identify the employability and entrepreneurial skills that are inherent to our degree programmes. We will also optimize our career services to make us better able to help students to sharpen their career building skills and find a suitable job.



Societal Impact

Current situation

As the University is intrinsically embedded in society as a whole, it cooperates with government, industry and society to share knowledge and generate new investment in research. This cooperation has a regional emphasis, as the University considers it very important to support and develop the area in which it has its roots. This cooperation takes shape as consultancy, public-private partnerships and a wide range of contracts and activities that facilitate knowledge creation, the dissemination of results and societal impact (patenting and licensing). The University supports these activities with a knowledge and technology transfer infrastructure that operates at local, national and international levels.

As top research is increasingly applied to major questions in society, the University has formulated three research priorities that will help us make a significant contribution to these questions. They are: Energy, which means solving questions related to innovations in generation, distribution and use of energy; Healthy Ageing, which means focusing on innovation in prevention, care and treatment; and Sustainable Society, which means helping to create and sustain a balanced society.

Vision

Realizing societal impact is an essential responsibility of the University. We transfer advanced academic knowledge to society to help solve the issues it is facing, such as how to personalize patient treatment, how to realize smart, liveable cities, and how to create a circular economy. We do this either in response to specific questions or on our own initiative. Although this knowledge transfer or value creation process mainly comprises the dissemination of knowledge, it also comprises support in converting this knowledge into sustainable economic and societal products, processes, services and new business activities.

Research, teaching and societal impact processes are closely intertwined at the University in order to help us achieve our societal impact goals. We constantly monitor our research results for societal impact, and our research-driven education teaches students to solve today's societal challenges. Furthermore, they actually work on questions from society, and we train them to be the entrepreneurs of tomorrow. The University has contact and cooperates with the public sector and local, national and international industry at all levels and in all disciplines, and this is actively encouraged. Staff and students thus develop the entrepreneurial attitude necessary to address society's needs.

Aim

Our aim is to make a significant and active contribution to solving societal issues, in particular those in the Northern Netherlands, by creating value from academic research and teaching. We create value via our graduates, as they bring knowledge and skills to the working world. We also create value through our collaboration and interaction with external partners at regional, national and international levels.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

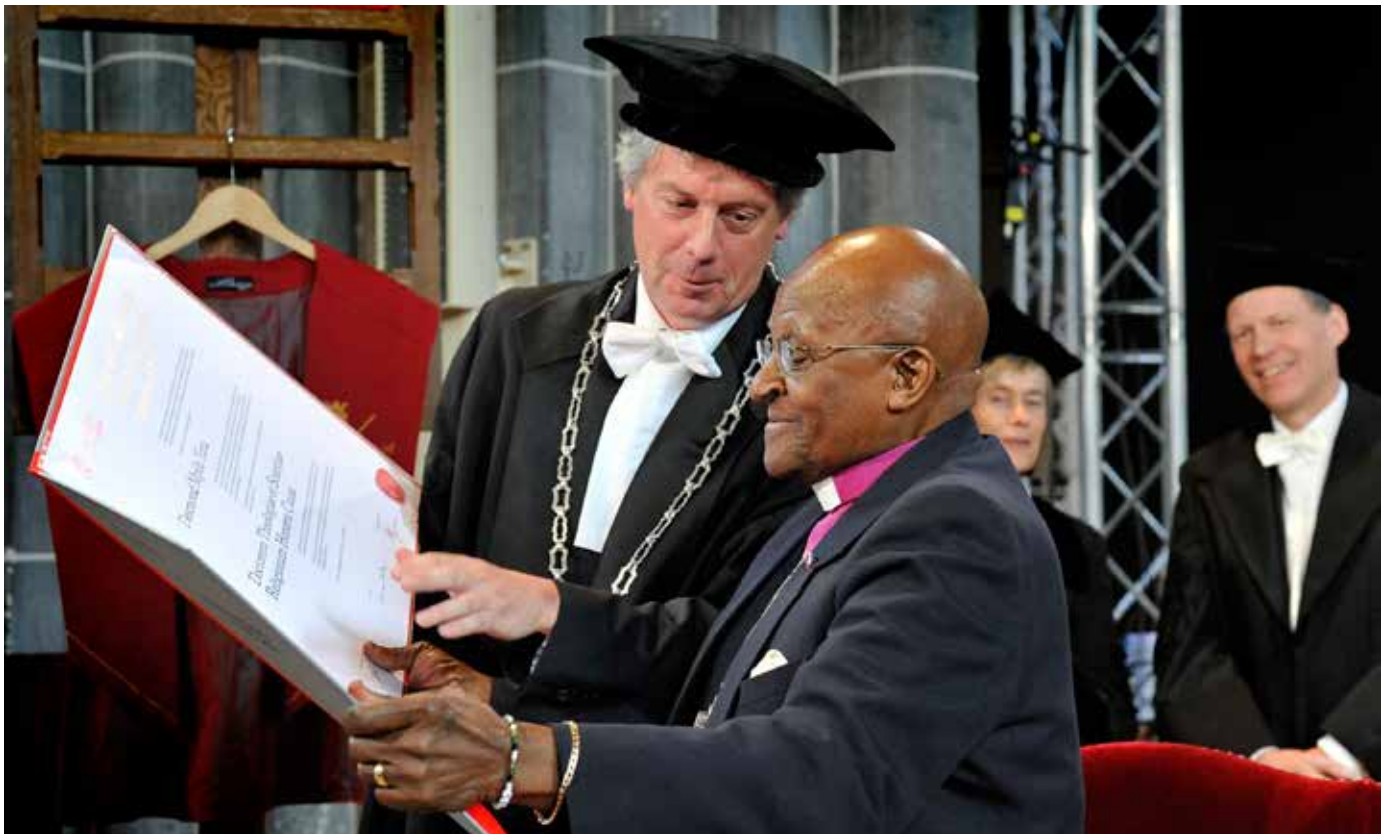
- increase the entrepreneurial and outreach attitude and skills of our students and staff
- optimize the infrastructure for knowledge transfer and value creation
- increase our contribution to society by strengthening the impact of our research priorities: energy, healthy ageing and sustainable society
- increase our interaction and partnerships with industry, NGOs and local and national government

Strategies

We will take a three-pronged approach to improving the outreach skills of our students. We will develop and implement entrepreneurial course units in our degree programmes, involve Master's students in solving societal questions and stimulate entrepreneurial activities for and by students. We will encourage our staff to adopt a more entrepreneurial attitude by supporting and rewarding their entrepreneurial and outreach initiatives.

The current infrastructure for knowledge transfer and value creation will be further professionalized in order to provide proper support for our staff and students. The aim is to increase our societal impact, maximize our competitive research funding success and intensify the identification of and capitalization on intellectual property.

We will further define our research priorities, thus clarifying our specific research strengths in those areas and increasing our impact. At the same time, we will foster and extend our networks all over the world through novel platforms such as international branch campuses. This will enable us to bring together government, industry and other knowledge partners and establish new public-private partnerships that relate to our research strengths and priorities.



Talent Development

Current situation

Talent Development is a core theme at the University. Interested secondary schools can follow pre-university education at our School's Academy. Our undergraduate students can choose to do a Minor, follow an Honours programme or enter our University College, depending on their interests and talents. Our Master's students can choose between a regular and a Research Master's programme and can follow an extra-curricular Honours Programme. Moreover, the faculty Graduate Schools give our Research Master's students and PhD candidates various opportunities to develop professionally.

We have a tenure track system for talented researchers, and our Rosalind Franklin Fellowships are an extra initiative launched to attract talented female researchers. We also provide academic leadership training for our tenured staff, facilitate the further development of teaching quality by UTQ and STQ, and have a Dean of Talent Development, whose job is to scout and support talented researchers in their careers.

All our students, PhD candidates and staff can make use of various support facilities, which include an extensive range of courses and special programmes such as our Talent Travel programme. This helps them explore their interests and abilities and plan their next career move, be it inside academia or elsewhere.

Vision

Talent development is fundamental to excellence in research and teaching: if you do not attract and develop talented people, you cannot achieve and retain sufficient excellence. The University therefore strives to be a community in which talent is recognized and can blossom. Our staff, PhD candidates and students are given ample opportunity to train and develop their specific strengths. Learning to work in an international context and together with others are key elements of their training alongside social responsibility and an entrepreneurial mentality. The University is thus able to provide society with a competent and knowledgeable workforce that will significantly help solve the challenges in the world.

Students

All students follow appealing programmes that stimulate the development of specific talents and impart the necessary knowledge and competences to allow them to perform at the forefront of society. Highly talented and motivated students are offered extra challenges via for example the University College and Honours, Research Master's programme, the possibilities for enrolment in more than one degree programme.

PhD candidates

The Graduate Schools provide an environment in which Research Master's students and PhD candidates can flourish. In this interdisciplinary international setting they work with prominent academics on challenging research questions while simultaneously being trained for a career in academia or elsewhere.



Staff

The University wants to make use of all academic talent available. Therefore we aim at attracting female and male talent from all over the world. For this, the University offers favourable employment conditions such as the tenure track system and ample development opportunities, making it an attractive employer for local and international research and support staff at all stages of their career. The research staff are actively encouraged and supported to develop their research and teaching skills, while the development of support staff focuses on the specific skills and versatility that they require. Special attention is paid to early career researchers (post docs en starting Tenure Trackers) and their career development and perspectives.



Aim

To attract, retain and develop the most talented students and staff, in keeping with the University's ambitions in terms of education, research and societal impact.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

- offer good international programmes to all students and extra challenges to the most motivated students with exceptional abilities
- continue, via the Graduate Schools, to provide an environment in which Research Master's students and PhD candidates can flourish and be trained as innovators in academia and elsewhere
- offer attractive employment conditions to talented staff
- realize a stimulating inclusive academic community in which students, PhD candidates and staff can develop their talents in cooperation with others and with the support of management and the organization

Strategies

In order to offer good international programmes, we will apply the international classroom concept to our degree programmes. We will also attract more international students and staff in order to create the necessary international context. International students will be attracted to the University as it increases its visibility and status in international networks and starts international branch campuses. They will also be attracted to the extra challenges already available, such as the Honours programmes.

By adapting the Research Master's and PhD programmes to today's demands and the diverse career options of students and PhD candidates, we will attract and train talented young researchers from diverse backgrounds and from all over the world.

Talented research staff will be drawn to the University by the attractive career opportunities. The tenure track system and especially the Rosalind Franklin Fellowships will continue and will appeal to all talented researchers, both male and female. In addition, the career paths available to researchers will be expanded in order to improve the career prospects for teaching and talent. Moreover, we will look into our secondary benefits such as childcare facilities and partner support to help us attract and retain talented staff.

In order to stimulate staff development we will further expand our range of programmes and improve staff mobility options. We will also actively help talented graduates and staff who are at an early stage of their careers to plan and develop their careers. If they wish, we will also help them find work at other renowned institutions.

We will ensure an inclusive academic community by extending our focus to inclusive leadership, intercultural awareness and competences, social responsibility and cooperation in the staff training programme. We will also provide a safe and accessible working and learning environment.

Provisions

Governance

Current situation

The University of Groningen is a organization of professionals. The success of the University is the shared responsibility of management, staff and students. The University uses the consultation model to generate commitment to strategic goals and related policies. Faculties and services have a mandate that allows them, within a given framework, to adjust University strategies and policies to their specific disciplines and situations and thus to some extent set their own agenda.

A sound management information system and a Plan-Do-Check-Act control cycle at all levels (Board, Faculty and institutions) of the University are used to assess the effectiveness of plans and measures that are implemented. Results are reported twice a year and discussed at the Administrative Meetings between the Board of the University and the faculties/services. The outcome of these meetings determines whether the University continues measures, modifies or cancels them. The funding is adjusted accordingly.

Within this system there is a healthy tension between trust in our staff and granting them autonomy and the role of the University as a public organization that needs to be accountable and transparent to society. In the last decade, the need for the latter has significantly increased. This has led to extra control cycles in the University and increased tension between the desire for staff autonomy and the need for control.

Vision

The successful running of the University is based upon a continuous process in which management, staff and students discuss and negotiate the framework and goals of the University. Within this evolving framework, staff are given freedom in how they choose to achieve these goals. This process is based on trust, the acknowledgement by all parties of a shared responsibility and the recognition of the different formal roles of each. Furthermore, as we must be accountable and transparent to society, we monitor our quality, goals and achievements. To combine these starting-points successfully the University will decrease the bureaucracy created by the need to be accountable to society wherever possible.



Aim

To strengthen the commitment and responsibility of the staff, students and management for the success and the wellbeing of the University and the University community.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

- increase the involvement of staff, students and management based on their different formal roles and right of say in the process and their autonomy within the given framework
- make the governance more strategy and output-driven by basing decisions on the plans for and the realization of set targets
- decrease the staff workload generated by the need to be accountable to society
- reinvent accountability to society via a relevant but limited and broadly accepted set of goals

Strategies

The governance system of shared objectives and autonomy in achieving these will be further implemented in order to increase the involvement of the academic community in the University and its functioning. In addition, the extensive administrative and participation circuit will continue to be used for ongoing discussion and negotiation on University strategy and policy. Moreover, we will further facilitate the professional development of the staff and students who sit on committees.

To support the governance system we will continue to develop an integral, extensive and accurate management information system to monitor quality, goals and achievements. The information system will ensure good control and an understanding of the essential processes within the University, which is necessary if we are to achieve our strategic goals and enhance our decision-making processes and accountability. It will also help us in our aim to reward good performance and operations that have been well thought through as well as help us to reinvent accountability, thereby decreasing the staff workload.



Student Services, Support and Participation

Current situation

The University of Groningen provides educational programmes, support services and general facilities for its students. In addition to high quality Bachelor's and Master's programmes, the attraction of the University of Groningen lies in the good reputation of the city of Groningen and its active student life. The combination of high quality education and an exciting environment to live in is a unique feature of the University. This results in graduates with broad experience who are well equipped for academic positions in society.



Vision

The University is an academic community of staff and students who collaborate to achieve the University's goals. Students are committed to their studies and take responsibility for student life in all its facets. At the same time, they are actively involved in the academic community and participate in the various levels of decision-making, from the University Council to the faculty councils and programme committees.

In return, students are given optimum support in completing their studies, planning their future career and pursuing their personal interests and strengths. Extra-curricular activities are facilitated and encouraged, because they broaden students' personal development and increase their skills and experiences.

Aim

To have an involved and committed student population that graduates on time and is well prepared for its future career. To this end, we offer excellent student services and facilities and actively engage students in University governance.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

- establish interrelated services and support for study and career at University and faculty levels
- actively involve students in the academic community
- facilitate extracurricular activities

Strategies

We will establish interrelated services and support by adopting and implementing an employability strategy for our career services and five-year plans for our student sports, student culture and student facilities.

Close cooperation with student and study associations, programme committees and student participation committees will actively encourage these to develop activities within the University framework and involve students in the academic community. The inclusion of international students in the academic community will be achieved by providing consistent bilingual communication for all services and activities. In addition, we will organize specific services and activities for international students.

In order to reward extracurricular activities, we will formulate a policy that promotes and rewards students for outstanding achievements beyond their field of study, e.g. in top sport, culture, entrepreneurship.



Infrastructure

In order to sustain excellent academic and support activities a modern, efficient and stimulating working and learning infrastructure will be provided. Key elements of this infrastructure are sustainable operations, up-to-date and where possible forefront information technology and fitting accommodation.

Sustainable operations

Current Situation

The University wants to make a substantial contribution to the transition to a sustainable society. It is concentrating on sustainable business operations and incorporating concepts of sustainability in teaching and research. Its ambitions up to 2020 have been set out in a roadmap, and the first projects have already started.

Vision

As a socially responsible institution, the University of Groningen promotes sustainable development throughout the University. This involves applying sustainability concepts in not only its teaching and research but also its business and human resources operations.

Aim

To strive for an environment that is carbon-neutral and promotes sustainable behaviour of both staff and students in their work, study and life.

To achieve our aim we will:

- promote the durable employability and mobility of our staff
- provide a sustainable and healthy working and studying environment

Strategies

In order to promote the sustainable employability and mobility of our staff, we will continue and extend our staff programmes Talent Travel, which supports mobility, and Balans, which supports a healthy lifestyle.

Making our old and new buildings energy-efficient and ecologically managing our grounds will help us to provide a sustainable working environment at the University. We will further reduce our ecological footprint by striving for 100% sustainable purchasing, making maximum use of renewable resources, reducing waste and encouraging waste separation. Concurrently we will assure that striving for 100% sustainability does not affect the liveability of the buildings and its surroundings.



Information Technology

Current situation

The University has high quality IT services for its teaching and research. Staff and students can make use of well-equipped teaching and practical rooms with modern PCs, flat screens and up-to-date IT tools for education. High performance computing and virtual reality facilities enable researchers to work at the forefront of science. New IT developments are deployed, monitored and implemented wherever possible, while flexible support is offered to ensure users can make optimal use of all IT facilities.

Vision

IT innovation and support are essential to achieving the University's aim for excellence in Research, Education, Societal Impact and Talent Development. IT plays the role of 'enabler' in these processes. The University takes a leading role in providing both its staff and students with state-of-the art knowledge and modern IT tools and support in an international and collaborative setting.

Aim

IT enables teaching, research and management.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

- actively deploy, monitor and implement state-of-the-art IT developments
- ensure an accessible and robust IT infrastructure
- support and instruct staff and students in the use of IT facilities and tools

Strategies

The new IT developments that will be implemented in the coming years will focus on student-centred learning, big data and information. In our teaching, we will continue to promote student-centred learning by using learning analytics and personalized systems and by improving the integration of educational systems.

Our research will benefit from the increased impact and accessibility of a high-quality infrastructure that offers high-performance computing, big data facilities and expert support from data scientists. In addition, we will develop an accessible infrastructure for generating and archiving scientific output and managing scientific data.

In order to ensure that students, staff and management receive the information they need, we will provide a limited number of accessible, reliable and robust information systems that have strong security and good privacy protection. We will also help our staff and students acquire the digital skills they need and increase their knowledge of information technology in their own field of interest.



Accommodation⁴

Current Situation

The University has influenced the urban development of its home city. With accommodation, the focus has shifted from growth and development to the quality of the buildings and surrounding areas. The requirements regarding work, research and study spaces and the surrounding area are changing, as is the nature of accommodation provision.

Vision

Our buildings are a means to an end: they create the conditions in which our international university community can thrive. Lecture halls, laboratories, offices, restaurants, study spaces and their surroundings are all essential to good teaching and research. They are a workplace for scholars.

Aim

To provide high-grade accommodation for students and staff in order to create optimal study and working conditions.

In order to achieve our aim we will:

- apply future-proof concepts to teaching and working spaces, so that they can accommodate changes in size and composition of the academic population
- use green technology, sustainable materials and interior designs that promote the wellbeing of the users

Strategies

In order to become future proof, we will adapt the designs of our buildings. Flexible and efficient use are the keywords in this process. Wherever possible, we will create flexible workstations. We will bring our teaching rooms, study and resource centres, project areas, conference rooms and restaurant facilities closer together and equip them with state-of-the-art facilities in order to create a community. All building and renovation work will be performed in a sustainable manner with the use of green technology and sustainable materials in order to reduce overall running costs and increase the wellbeing of our students and staff.



⁴ 'Smart work, smart buildings' Accommodation Plan 2015-2024.
<http://www.rug.nl/about-us/where-do-we-stand/facts-and-figures/accommodation-plan-2015-2024.pdf>



Colophon

University of Groningen, Office of the University

The Strategic Plan was developed after thorough consultations at all levels of the organization:

- discussion tables with students and staff
- meetings with external contacts
- consultations with Deans / Faculty Boards
- discussions with members of the University Council
- input from the Supervisory Board

Images

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Layout

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