



VSNU

vereniging van universiteiten
association of universities
THE NETHERLANDS



Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en
Wetenschap

Sector agreement research universities 2018

Amsterdam

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In the *Sectorakkoord wo-2018* (research universities sector agreement 2018), the Minister of Education, Culture and Science and the publicly funded research universities represented in this matter by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU) have set down their higher education quality agreements, the way in which the research universities profile themselves, and the joint priorities for the term of the present government.

The sector agreement relates to all publicly funded research universities and runs from 2019 to 2022. To the extent that this sector agreement relates to quality agreements, it runs from 2019 to 2024. The sector agreement is founded on various documents: the '*Vertrouwen in de toekomst*' coalition agreement (2017), the letter to the House of Representatives regarding the deployment of the extra research resources (March 2018), the *Gemeenschappelijke Agenda Hoger Onderwijs LSVb, ISO, Vereniging Hogescholen en VSNU* (LSVb, ISO, Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Science and VSNU Joint Agenda for Higher Education, 2016), the *Strategische Agenda Hoger Onderwijs en Onderzoek 'De Waarde(n) van weten'* (Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research, 'The value of knowledge', 2015), the *Nationale Wetenschapsagenda* (National Research Agenda, 2015) and the *Wetenschapsvisie 2025: keuzes voor de toekomst* (2025 vision for science, choices for the future, 2014).

The agreements in this agreement are based on a number of shared starting points:

- The work of the research universities in the field of research, teaching, and impact is of crucial significance in the strengthening of the knowledge-based society in the Netherlands and in tackling global challenges. Scientists at Dutch research universities teach and carry out world-class academic research. This is thanks in part to the autonomous position of Dutch research universities and the strong relationship between teaching and research.
- Research universities, the business sector, and social organisations work closely together on societal challenges. This is reflected not just in the *National Research Agenda* that has been devised by the broad-based knowledge coalition¹, but also in the strategic knowledge agendas of the ministerial departments, the *Kennis en Innovatieagenda* (Knowledge and Innovation Agenda) and such initiatives the Technology Pact, the Care Pact, and the Green Pact.
- In recent years, the research universities have succeeded in achieving the ambitions from the previous sector agreement, dating from 2011. As a result, student pass rates have improved, the research universities have invested in getting university lecturers formal teaching qualifications, and they have also succeeded in having more students take part in talent programmes. Moreover, the research universities carried out extra investments in the quality of teaching between 2015 and 2017, in anticipation of the revenues from the student loan system becoming available.
- The Veerman Commission of 2010 proposed that substantial investments were absolutely necessary to maintain and strengthen the position of higher education in the Netherlands. This requires good collaboration between research universities and the central government, and effective and targeted expenditure of the revenues from the student loan system and research that are now becoming available.
- The sector agreement will not become reality without the - already substantial - commitment of teachers and researchers at research universities. The agreement offers scope to reduce the pressure of work, while at the same time improving teaching and research.
- This means the agreement that is being concluded for the next few years will be about a number of measures that could improve the quality of studying and working at research universities in the short term. This will be done through investments using the revenues from the student loan system and the additional revenues for research, while at the same time the research universities will have to carry out efficiency savings imposed by the current and previous government.
- The Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science will ensure that green education is firmly embedded in its system's policies, and that administrative consultations on the matter with the education sector will take place.
- For further renewal and greater profiling in higher education in the long term, the research universities and the minister will be jointly developing new strategic agendas for university teaching and research. A key aspect of this will be a desire to achieve a sustainable balance of

¹ The Knowledge Coalition consists of the research universities (VSNU), universities of applied sciences (Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences), University Medical Centres (NFU), Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO), VNO-NCW, MKB-Nederland, and the institutes for applied research (TNO/TO2).

quality, accessibility, and efficiency, as will be the ambition of the research universities to play a crucial role in solving major societal challenges.

The undersigned,

- The Minister of Education, Culture and Science (OCW),
 - the publicly funded research universities, represented in this matter by the Association of Universities in the Netherlands (VSNU),

with the consent of the Dutch Student Union (LSVb) and the Dutch National Students' Association (ISO) to the quality agreements section,

agree to the following:

1. Investing in the quality of education

A. Investing revenues from the student loan system through quality agreements

The coalition agreement states that the revenues from the student loan system shall be linked to 'quality agreements at institutional level'. There is broad agreement for implementing these agreements in close dialogue with the education community and, where relevant, with the involvement of relevant partners. Students, universities of applied sciences, research universities, and the minister are addressing this matter and have made agreements on the quality agreements. This part of the sector agreement concerns these agreements and runs from 2019 to 2024.

The aim is to use the revenues from the student loan system to make clear improvements in education. In this respect, we have a promise to keep to students. Universities of applied sciences and research universities have already given a boost to higher education through previous investments, and with the deployment of the revenues from the student loan system, they seek to further this process.

In substantive terms, we are adhering to the course set down in the Strategic Agenda of 2015 and the Joint Agenda of the Netherlands Association of the Universities of Applied Sciences, VSNU, ISO, and LSVb, with a greater focus on the personal and social education of students, a stronger emphasis on progress through the educational chain, and a firmer embedding of higher education in society.

In view of the aforementioned, education institutes are formulating proposals and aims for improvements in the following areas: more intensive and small-scale teaching; educational differentiation, including the development of talent both as part of and away from studies; an improvement to the professional qualities of teachers; appropriate and good-quality educational facilities; more and better supervision of students; study success, including progression to other courses, access, and equality of opportunity. This document sets out in greater detail how we define these areas, or themes.

Implementation by individual institutes

The education institutes will individually translate the common themes for which the resources are to be used into concrete measures and policies. This will take place in a dialogue between students, teachers, external relevant stakeholders (businesses, social organisations, other educational establishments, regional governments), managers, participation bodies, and regulators.

Each institute will produce a plan to show what it is seeking to achieve with the revenues from the student loan system until the year 2024. These plans on how the revenues from the student loan system are to be used will contain expenditure proposals (hereinafter referred to as 'proposals') in relation to the six nationally agreed themes and the aims that each institute seeks to achieve through this expenditure. Proposals and aims may apply to the entire institute, but also to certain parts of it or to specific groups of students. For each of the six themes, the institutes will describe either the proposals and the related aims they seek to achieve in respect of each theme using the revenues from the student loan system, or why they have decided not to allocate any of the resources to a particular theme. The institutes will also describe in explicit terms their justification for their choices in relation to their broader educational proposals, vision, history, and context; this can include their long-term budgetary developments.

They also set out in their plans how far they would like to have come in achieving their proposals by the year 2021.

Each institute's plan on how to use the revenues from the student loan system can be incorporated into a new institutional plan, but it could also be appended to an existing one, for example.

Parties agree that the education institutes will give their participation bodies the right to give their consent to their plans regarding the use of the revenues from the student loan system. The institutes will also give their participation bodies the right to give their consent to that part of the annual budget concerning the revenues from the student loan system, based on the consideration that said revenues are among the main parts of each institute's budget. This concerns more concrete details of the long-term budget contained in the plan. Management and the participation bodies will also agree on the process to be followed in order to arrive at the plan on how to use revenues from the student loan system. The participation bodies will be involved at an appropriately early stage and thereby have the opportunity to contribute ideas. Management and the participation bodies will jointly ensure the broad-based involvement of the community of the university of applied sciences/research university and will agree on which bodies in their respective institutes will be involved in the creation of their plan.

The long-term budget that each institute includes in its plan will provide information on the areas to which the institutes propose to spend the revenues from the student loan system. This will provide a means for being accountable to students, parliament, and society at large with regard to how the revenues are to be spent and therefore how the aims are to be achieved.

It is possible that some institutes will have already made investments prior to the emergence of the revenues from the student loan system that they would not have made without the prospect of these revenues becoming available. If they wish, the institutes concerned can make this known in their plans, and they may decide to use the revenues from the student loan system to further the investments they had made for 2015-2017.

In the institutes' annual plans from the year 2019, they will account in a separate chapter for the progress they have made in terms of content and process. They will also contain the agreements with the participation bodies on how the revenues from the student loan system are to be spent. The Netherlands Association of the Universities of Applied Sciences, the VSNU, and student organisations have previously agreed that each main participation body would be given the opportunity to report independently on how the revenues from the student loan system should be spent. This will appear in an appendix to the annual report. A report on how the right to give consent works appears in the participation monitor, which appears every two years.

Each university of applied sciences/research university will ensure that the participation bodies are properly equipped to be able to hold discussions with them. Each university of applied sciences/research university will support their participation bodies and facilitate them in the execution of their duties, such as the provision of a toolkit for assessing the main point of budgets and of sufficient time. The ministry will assist the ISO, LSVb, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, and the VSNU in the setting up of a national point of contact for specific questions raised by participation bodies. The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, VSNU, and the ISO and LSVb student organisations have noted that proper participation on the part of participation bodies in the matter of quality agreements and in a broader sense is important for universities of applied sciences/research universities. They have therefore reached agreements on making enough time available for the student members on the main participation bodies. Larger universities of applied sciences/research universities will make at least eight hours a week available for the student members of their main participation bodies, and those with under ten thousand students, at least four hours a week. A 'comply or explain' principle exists in relation to these minimum levels.

Parties agree that the plans for using revenues from the student loan system will be put to their supervisory boards after the participation bodies have given their consent to them.

Independent assessing

The plans and their realisation will be assessed independently. This will be in line with the process of the voluntary institutional audit (ITK), which is carried out by the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO). It is expected that most institutes will use the ITK cycle. This means there will be few additional burdens associated with the assessment of the quality agreements, and the task will lie with the existing higher-education regulatory authority. A separate quality-agreements trail will be added to the ITK process, which is based on an assessment by a panel and a visit by the panel to the institute concerned. This will result in independent recommendations being made to the minister regarding the relevant institute's plan for using the revenues from the student loan system. These recommendations will therefore be separate to the NVAO decision on the ITK.

For institutes that do not take part in an ITK, a separate process will be set up, which will also be based on an assessment by a panel that visits the institutes in question. Regarding the institutes for which a separate ITK has already been completed, a 'third trail light' will be set up, using the panel (or part of it) that was involved with the ITK.

There are three assessment moments: an assessment of the initial plans, an assessment in the autumn of 2022, and a post-period evaluation. The judgements of the NVAO at each of these moments will lead to recommendations for each institute to the minister. An assessment framework will be determined for the assessments, in line with the agreements contained in this document. A description of what is being assessed will be given for each assessment moment.

Assessing the plans

The following criteria will be used to assess each institute's plan.

- The plan makes a reasoned contribution to improving educational quality. The institute's proposals for the revenues from the student loan system and the aims it seeks to realise with them in relation to the six themes are clearly formulated and are in keeping with the institute's context, history, and broad vision.
- The internal stakeholders have been sufficiently involved with the drawing up of the plan and there is sufficient support among internal and external stakeholders.
- The proposals in the plan are realistic in the light of the proposed use of the instruments and resources, and of the institute's organisation and processes.

Assessment in 2022

In 2022, there will be an assessment of what the plan has achieved up to the year 2021. The criteria for this assessment will be:

- The institute has made sufficient progress in realising its proposals, bearing in mind the efforts that have been made and how it has dealt with unforeseen circumstances.
- The participation bodies and other relevant stakeholders have been sufficiently involved during the implementation of the plan.

In order to assess this, the institute will itself take stock of the situation in its 2021 annual report. To this will be added a reflection by the participation bodies on what the plan has achieved at that point, as will the involvement of stakeholders and the degree to which the participation bodies have been able to play their part. The 2021 annual reports and the reflection by the participation bodies will form the basis for the assessments by the NVAO. The Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders (NVAO) will hold additional discussions with the institute if it is necessary on the basis of these documents, and the panel involved in the assessment of the plan may be asked to visit the institute again.

Evaluation

The evaluation of what has been achieved by the plans at the end forms part of the ITK process, in the case of institutes that take part in it. This concerns the next ITK cycle. The achievements of the plans of institutes that do not take part in the ITK are evaluated six years after their original assessment. This means that the evaluations of all the institutes do not take place at the same time. Some institutes will have a new ITK in 2023, and others not until early 2026.

As well as the evaluation of this series of quality agreements, the assessment of any subsequent plans may be included in the ITK cycle that starts in 2023. It will be up to a future government to decide whether a system of quality agreements should be continued. The decisions on this will be made before the start of the new ITK cycle.

The evaluation is, like the assessment of the plans prior to the use of the revenues from the student loan system, an assessment that involves a panel and a visit to the institute in question. The evaluation will involve the use of existing documents - annual reports by the relevant institute (the most recent in particular) and, as with the 2022 assessment, the reflection by the participation bodies.

As with the 2022 assessment, the criteria for the evaluation are:

- Up to 2024, the institute has sufficiently realised its proposals, bearing in mind the efforts that have been made and how it has dealt with unforeseen circumstances.
- The participation bodies and other relevant stakeholders have been sufficiently involved during the implementation of the plan.

Funding

The legal basis on which the minister awards the revenues from the student loan system in the form of additional funding - the so-called quality funding - is set down in an Order in Council, based

on Article 2.6 of the Higher Education and Research Act (WHW). This Order in Council contains, inter alia, the substantive themes on which the institutes should formulate their proposals and goals, as well as the period for which the quality funding is to be awarded.

In the case of research universities, the revenues from the student loan system will be distributed in proportion to the share of student-related funding for each institute in a year. The table below shows the revenues from the student loan system that will be available for research universities between 2019 and 2024.

x €1 million*	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
90% revenue from the student loan system	184	217	368	460	485	550
<i>of which, research universities</i>	69	82	140	175	184	209
<i>Accumulation to 2023 - 2024 for possible financial consequences for research universities</i>						25

*All the figures in the table have been rounded up or down, which accounts for any mathematical discrepancies between the figures

In the light of this sector agreement, which the VSNU endorses on behalf of every research university, the revenues from the student loan system for 2019 and 2020 will be paid out unconditionally in the lump sum (in proportion to the share of student-related funding for each research university in a year).

In the period up to April 2020, the institutes' plans will be assessed by the NVAO. In the event of a positive recommendation by the NVAO and a positive decision by the minister, the institute in question will receive its revenues from the student loan system in the form of quality funding for the period between 2021 and 2024.

The minister will hold discussions with institutes that initially receive a negative assessment about their plans from the NVAO. If the minister then adopts the recommendations by the NVAO, the institutes in question will then have the opportunity to submit new plans that do meet the criteria within twelve months. If the minister still has a negative opinion after the submission of the revised plan (based on the recommendations of the NVAO), the starting point is that the revenues from the student loan system will not be paid out to the institute concerned for the period between 2021 and 2024. The resources will then be reallocated to the other universities of applied sciences or research universities on a pro rata basis.

If the 2022 assessment reveals that insufficient progress has been made in fulfilling the plan, the minister will hold discussions with the institute involved - said institute will then have twelve months to show that it is indeed making enough progress. The NVAO will carry out an assessment in the autumn of 2023, based on a reflection by the institute itself and its participation bodies, to see whether sufficient progress has been made. If progress has not been adequate up to this point, the additional (to 2023) revenues from the student loan system that would have become available for 2024 (the 'accumulation') will be cut. This amount will be made available in 2024 through the Comenius Programme to teachers of the institute in question who have submitted proposals in the field of educational innovation and improvement, unless the minister has well-founded reasons not to opt for this system in the case of individual institutes. This way, the revenues will be allocated to the quality of education of said institute in any case.

Because the *Nationaal Regieorgaan Onderwijsonderzoek* (Netherlands Initiative for Education Research) will assess the quality aspects of Comenius proposals by teachers, it is possible that the revenues for the relevant institute will not be exhausted. In this case, the excess resources will flow back to the lump sum and be distributed across every university of applied sciences or research university.

There are no costs associated with the evaluation of the fulfilment of the plan for using revenues from the student loan system. The institutes can use the results of the evaluation for determining their own strategies and, if a future government decides that quality agreements should be made, when drawing up their plans for the next period. The minister will also hold discussions with those institutes that are judged insufficient by the NVAO.

Following national developments

The quality agreements give institutes the scope to make their own choices regarding improvements to educational quality. The progress of the quality agreements is monitored at institute level, as described above. At the same time, parties wish to see what quality agreements mean from a national perspective for improving the quality of education. For that reason, the NVAO will create an independent national picture from the year 2020 of the current state of play regarding quality agreements. The picture will be based on the plans and on the initial period of their implementation. An interim assessment in 2022 will also serve as a the basis of a national picture to be drawn up by the NVAO. No additional information will be required from the institutes for these national pictures.

B. Equality of opportunity remains priority: advancing from one course to another and accessibility

In order for the Dutch knowledge society to progress, university education should be as accessible as possible. This means that students - regardless of their origins or background - who meet the necessary requirements and who have the ambition to go to university should be able to do so and successfully complete a study programme within a reasonable period of time. It is important that students with the right competencies are able to progress into and within higher education. The VSNU and the minister are working closely together to work out the details of the following aims regarding accessibility to the Bachelor's and Master's phase:

- Research universities are working closely with secondary schools to prepare prospective students for higher education and to help them feel at home and at ease once they are there. Extra resources have been made available for this purpose for the years 2018 to 2021. The research universities are closely involved with knowledge sharing and monitoring, with the aim of creating sustainable and effective regional collaboration between the education sectors. Important priorities here are coordinated curricula, continuous supervision, transparent information, and mutual feedback.
- Research universities are looking critically, especially in those sectors with shortages, at whether a fixed number of enrolments is necessary and are committed to combating the negative effects of decentralised selection, such as unjustified self-selection. To achieve this, any proposal to establish a fixed number of enrolments will have to be well-founded. The minister will have the option of blocking any such proposal. This is in keeping with the coalition agreement.
- In 2018, the VSNU will issue a recommendation in consultation with the student organisations to the minister regarding the parameters for access to the Master's phase. At least two matters will be better embedded in this regard: the methods for selection should be transparent and fair, and accessibility to the Master's phase should be guaranteed. The starting point is that at least every Bachelor's graduate from a Dutch university should be able to progress to at least one Master's programme in their own field. Legislation about admission to Bachelor's and Master's programmes will be closely examined and any ambiguities will be eliminated.
- The VSNU, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, and the minister are setting up a *Werkgroep Studentenwelzijn* (student welfare working group), in which the student unions, Handicap & Studie (the Dutch expert centre for studying with disabilities), and the Association of Netherlands Municipalities (VNG) are participants. The working group will make an inventory of student welfare problem areas and carry out any necessary improvements. In this connection, a strengthening of the student financial support fund of €2 million (universities of applied sciences and research universities) was announced in the coalition agreement, to take effect in 2018. This is intended for students who need additional support and supervision, such as those who are pregnant, those with an impairment, a chronic illness, psychological problems, or exceptional personal circumstances.

C. Internationalisation for quality

The research universities and the minister are convinced that internationalisation creates added value to the quality of teaching and research. Against that background, the institutes endorse the ambition expressed in the '*Vertrouwen in de toekomst*' coalition agreement. It should be possible for a broad-based and larger group of students to gain international experience and thereby develop an international perspective and intercultural skills. This can be achieved by taking a course (or part of one) abroad, but also through internationalisation at home.

At the same time, there are concerns in society about the anglicisation of the range of study programmes, the growing numbers of international students, and about the possible sidelining of Dutch aspects. Demand for well-qualified talented individuals on the Dutch labour market remains high however, as a result in part of the shrinking population - falling birth rates and the fact that

people are living longer. We therefore have to make education for foreign students more attractive, while keeping it accessible to students from the Netherlands.

- In order to realise these ambitions, the VSNU and the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences will be publishing their internationalisation agenda this spring, and the minister will be presenting her internationalisation vision to the House of Representatives before the summer.
- The agenda and vision will examine the following themes:
 - The importance of internationalisation, a balanced internationalisation policy, and the necessary preconditions. Controlled development of the number of international students that is appropriate to the number of spaces on a particular study programme, bearing in mind the need to safeguard quality and accessibility.
 - The position of English at research universities and the measures needed in order to keep them accessible to Dutch students, and to ensure that there are sufficient numbers of Dutch-language programmes.
 - Encouraging outbound mobility and offering international experience;
 - Strengthening links between international graduates and the Netherlands.

D. Relevance to the labour market and encouraging entrepreneurial education

The research universities and the minister are aiming to have a transparent range of study programmes that are closely relevant to the labour market, advanced programmes, science, and society. Clear and prominent information, via the study information leaflet, is very important here. In the letter of 28 October 2016 to the House of Representatives about the macro-efficiency policy, it was stated that the realisation of a macro-efficient range of study programmes requires the following: greater attention for the existing range, more scope for innovation and responsiveness, more ownership for institutes, more collaboration between institutes and other stakeholders, and fewer administrative burdens. The agreements made on this are contained in said letter. The following actions will be carried out in the near future:

- After the summer of 2018, administrative consultations will take place with the VSNU, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, ISO, and LSVb, about possible problem areas relating to macro-efficiency and relevance to the labour market, partly on the basis of the results from the *Nationale Alumni Enquête* (national alumni survey, NAE), and the HBO monitor. These administrative consultations will precede the cycle of biennial administrative discussions about macro-efficiency that will start in 2019.
- In the context of the resources that have been announced in the coalition agreement, work is currently underway on sector plans for science and engineering subjects (engineering, computer science, physics, chemistry, and mathematics) and the social sciences and the humanities. Teaching and research will be examined jointly in the sector plans, so that they can reinforce each other (see Section 3A).
- During the next few months, the VSNU, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, ISO, LSVb, and the minister will use existing data from the NAE and elsewhere to examine whether further sectoral analyses are needed, the results of which should be reflected in sector plans. Where necessary, this macro-efficiency aspect will be included in the case of the aforementioned sectors. A good sector plan could lead to greater freedom within the macro-efficiency policy.
- In the context of relevance to the labour market, the research universities will commit themselves, where relevant to their context or profile, to the provision of an appropriate range of entrepreneurial education. The ultimate aim is for more students to gain direct experience of entrepreneurship and to offer every student who wants it the opportunity of acquiring entrepreneurial skills.

2. Working on world-class research

A. Profiling

If research universities and universities of applied sciences want to stay at the top, a clear research and teaching profile is essential. The underlying aim of profiling is that astute choices by universities lead to more quality (pooling expertise, achieving top-level research), more efficiency (less overlapping, more collaboration, greater relevance to the labour market) and more freedom of choice for students (greater educational differentiation). Two national instruments help towards greater profiling in research and teaching - the *Nationale Wetenschapsagenda* (National Research Agenda) and sector plans.

National Research Agenda (NWA)

In the coalition agreement, the NWA is acknowledged as a directional agenda and the cabinet has given it a substantial financial boost. The Knowledge Coalition, of which the VSNU forms part, and the cabinet are committed to the NWA. It is important that both parties act upon the NWA as they see fit. The minister is doing so by investing in an NWA programme with broad-based consortia of universities, the business sector, and others. The minister is also involving other ministers, including the Minister of Economic Affairs and Climate Policy, with the NWA. Research universities are doing so by strengthening their research bases (through sector plans, for example), which will also help towards the deployment of NWA routes. The research universities will state in substantive terms in their strategic institutional plans how their research and teaching profiles will link up to the NWA.

It has been agreed in the *Wetenschapsvisie 2025* (vision for science) of 2014 that the PhD bonus would be capped. The cap, which was introduced in 2017, has not resulted in additional resources or a redistribution of resources, but does make the funding of universities more stable. This gives institutes the scope to make more considered long-term choices from current resources in their research profiles. As announced in the cabinet response to the NWA (27 November 2015), this scope within the current resources is intended to support the profiling of research that contributes to the NWA.

Sector plans

Sector plans are important for the purpose of arriving at profiling choices. Additional resources for research are being made available as part of the coalition agreement, of which up to €70 million is via sector plans. The cabinet is investing these resources in line with the coalition agreement, especially in science and engineering research. There is also scope in this budget to invest in a social sciences and humanities sector plan. It is obvious that the 2% fund allocation should be used for sector plans and for problem areas relating to teaching capacity. The 2% can also be used at a later stage for sector plans in other sectors.

The aim is to create synergy between research and teaching aspects of sector plans, with a view to the close interrelationship between and integrated priority setting in teaching and research. To that end, the sector plans will focus on problem areas in teaching capacity, and if relevant to the sector, on other educational aspects like efficiency, life-long learning, flexibility, and internationalisation. Here, too, the results of the national efficiency analysis of the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Science, the VSNU, ISO, and LSVb will be used (see Section 1E).

The 2% fund allocation will be temporarily (during the period up to 2022) added to the lump sum. Research universities do not therefore have to account for this separately. This also applies to the capping of the PhD bonus. Provisions regarding control, aims, and evaluation have been made in the research resources arrangement for the sector plans.

B. Being at the international forefront in the field of open science

The transition to open science is happening worldwide. Open science means that society is more closely involved with scientific research. The Netherlands is fulfilling a guiding role in this transition. That is why the *National Plan Open Science* was drawn up in 2017, with the following aims:

1. 100% open access publishing by 2020;
2. optimising suitability of research data for re-use;
3. acknowledgement and appreciation;
4. encouragement and support.

The VSNU, research universities and the minister are committed to achieving these aims:

- International collaboration is needed in order to realise Dutch ambitions in the field of open science. For that reason, the research universities and the central government are pushing in international discussions for the realisation of the aims in the *National Plan Open Science*, the Council Conclusions, and the coalition agreement.
- The way in which public money is spent should be transparent. It is therefore undesirable that research universities sign non-disclosure agreements in contracts with scientific publishers. Universities will commit themselves not to sign any non-disclosure agreements with publishers.
- The VSNU is discussing progress in relation to the four aims in the *National Plan Open Science* in the *National Platform Open Science* and in administrative discussions with the minister. For open access, the VSNU gives information about progress through qualitative and quantitative (including percentages) monitoring.
- The Taverne amendment sets down in law (in authors' contract law) that any Dutch author has the right to make his or her academic work, for which the research was funded wholly or partly

by Dutch public resources, not available to the public. However, the source must be clearly acknowledged at the first time of publication. Research universities will implement this law by placing any such work into a repository within a reasonable period of time. If this should lead to any resistance among publishers, the minister may mediate.

C. Strengthening impact

As well as teaching and research, making a social impact is the third core task of a research university. A perfect example of where university fundamental and applied research, impact, and society come together is that of the NWA. In order to further enhance the impact of Dutch research universities, institutes are committed to providing entrepreneurial education and, with due regard to competition law aspects, to promoting academic start-ups.

- As a means of increasing social impact, the presence of a strong knowledge transfer office (KTO) with expertise about academic start-ups in an institute is essential. In cases where this creates added value, the institutes will be aiming to raise the number of academic start-ups in the next few years. With the efforts in the national KTO network, the VSNU remains committed to further improving the professional standards of the KTOs at research universities. Wherever Dutch research groups start working together around certain themes (in sector plans, for example, and via the NWA), the added value and desirability of the setting up of a theme-based knowledge transfer function will be looked at for the purpose of making a social impact.
- The VSNU is currently developing a dashboard on which the university sector is accountable in terms of teaching, research, and impact (see Section 3B), by reporting about start-ups and patents, among other things. However, the latter indicators are relevant primarily for the scientific, engineering, and medical disciplines. To make clear that there is more to social impact than the number of start-ups and patents, and that it is relevant to all academic disciplines (including the humanities), the VSNU is aiming to have a wide range of indicators. A review of which indicators are used most will take place in a few years' time. Universities may also add indicators of their own to the dashboard that fit with their particular profile. As the indicators are developed further, the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW) report that is due to be published, *Impact in Kaart*, may be used.
- Universities state in their annual reports how they have formulated their ambitions in relation to impact.
- Impact is an important part of the sector plans.

D. Making more use of female talent

Carrying out world-class research means leaving no talent untapped. In recent years, every research university has made progress in increasing the number of female professors. At the same time, there is enough potential among female assistant and associate professors for the number of female professors to grow further still. The Westerdijk Talent Scheme helps research universities to appoint 100 female professors in one go, over and above the target figures.

- The previous target figures for female professors at research universities are to be reconfirmed. This is a sign from the universities that they remain committed to more talented female individuals. The universities include their target figures and progress in their annual reports.
- The reports for 2021 about what has actually been achieved compared to the target figures for 2020 will feature both the figures without the Westerdijk professors and the percentage of female professors including the Westerdijk Talent Scheme. The Westerdijk professors do not count towards the target figures.

3. Conditions for this agreement

A. Investments

Additional resources to the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science budget are being made structurally available from the revenues from the student loan system for improving the quality of education. For research universities, this increases from 77 million euros in 2019 to 232 million in 2024. Some of the revenues from the student loan system (10%) have already been earmarked for national priorities. Quality agreements to run from 2019 to 2024 will be made in respect of the remaining revenues (90%). In addition, 39 million euros a year of profiling resources is already available (2% of the funds). Resources are also being made available as a result of the coalition agreement for fundamental research, applied research, and innovation and research infrastructure.

The revenues from the student loan system and the extra research resources represent a substantial addition to higher education and research budgets. The research universities point out

that this should be seen in a broader financial context, including missions set by previous governments and the current one.

The research universities object to the 'more efficient education' mission that features in the coalition agreement and to the resolution of undesirable shortages at green research universities from the macro budget.

The minister takes the view that, with the conclusion of this agreement, the research universities can get to work in achieving high-quality education and research. Decisions remain to be taken on how the coalition agreement efficiency discount is to be implemented. Modifying or revoking the mission is not an option for the minister, nor is compensating any shortfalls at Wageningen University from outside the macro budget.

Funding system

Based on the Rutte III coalition agreement, the minister will be reviewing the funding system during the period of office of this government. The current higher education funding system was introduced in 2011 in consultation with the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the VSNU, and the student unions. The purpose of reviewing the funding system is to improve the current distribution model and to make it more in keeping with the tasks and activities of the institutes. The focus will be on the funding rates in the education section of the central government grant to universities of applied sciences and research universities, and on the structure of the research part of universities. Elements that will be considered during the review are the issues relating to the funding of students on bridging programmes (to research university Master's) who have already used part of their funding, and the teaching of science and engineering subjects. It has been agreed that the ministry will consult closely with the VSNU regarding the review. An initial version of the possible alterations will be ready in 2019. The review will in any case not lead to a redistribution between universities of applied sciences and research universities.

B. Transparency and accountability

The universities of applied sciences, universities, the student organisations, and the government all endorse the importance of greater transparency of development in higher education. To that end, the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, the VSNU, and the minister will jointly initiate the development of a permanent national overview for universities of applied sciences and research universities of core data for education, research, and impact (in the form of a digital sector dashboard, for example). With a view to public accountability and to enable local participation bodies and the institutes to see where they stand, developments at individual institutes will also be made transparent. The reports will give a broad-based picture of developments in higher education. For the content of the overview, the parties will use existing quantitative and qualitative systemic and institutional level information. In doing so, they will observe the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation. The first overviews will be drawn up in early 2019.

The aim of the research universities and the minister is to use and combine existing information about the system and institutes as effectively as possible, while the quality of information improves and the burden on institutes to provide information is reduced. The replication of tasks by various bodies, such as the VSNU, the Netherlands Association of Applied Sciences, the Inspectorate of Education, NVAO, the Committee for Efficiency in Higher Education (CDHO), and DUO, will be prevented, where possible, by harmonising the surveys and the databases used for them. Together with relevant parties, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science will explore what data may be shared with the parties, for what purpose, and by what method.

The aim is to continue the current method as much as possible, but alternatives will be considered as part of the analysis. Alterations to legislation may form part of the solution in order that the provisions of the General Data Protection Regulation are met.

C. Workload and reducing the regulatory burden

Reducing workloads is an important priority for the next few years. Work pressures on employees have many different causes, and each research university should devise its own approach. Nonetheless, there are some common features. The research universities and the minister have therefore agreed the following:

- The research universities have drawn up plans for reducing workloads. They will be carrying them out in the next few years. In the process, they will also be looking at internal regulatory burdens.
- The minister endorses and supports the actions and aims of NWO and VSNU to reduce the indirect funding application pressures.

- The minister will be exploring with the VSNU and the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences how a better balance between the safeguarding of quality of study programmes on the one hand and administrative burdens on the other can be struck. One method that will be considered is that of institutional accreditation. The *Accreditatie op maat* (tailored accreditation) legislative proposal and the adjustment to the accreditation framework should help reduce the burden of the accreditation process and other regulatory pressures, and result in the education community gaining ownership of quality aspects. It is assumed that there will be a lightening of the burden by restricting accreditation to the confirmation of basic quality.
- To lighten administrative burdens, attempts will also be made via the existing information agreement between the ministry, VSNU, and the Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, to further reduce the number of surveys taking place at institutes, without compromising the regulatory duties of the government. The *Nationaal Regieorgaan Onderwijsonderzoek* (Netherlands Initiative for Education Research, NRO) will, at the request of the ministry, maintain an overview of all current and complete policy surveys into higher education, both in and outside the context of the information agreements.
- Legislation from other ministries also leads to regulatory burdens at research universities. The Advisory Board on Regulatory Burden (ATR) assesses the consequences in terms of regulatory pressure of new legislation from every ministry. If the VSNU enters into discussions with the relevant ministry on legislation that affects their members, the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science will join them if the VSNU so wishes.

In conclusion

This sector agreement is a step in the right direction towards higher education that is even more dynamic and future-proof. In order to bring about changes in the long term, the research universities and universities of applied sciences have agreed to hold discussions with each other and external stakeholders about the future of higher education. An interactive process with the higher education sector will be launched to this end.

The universities of applied sciences, the research universities, and the ministry regard the recommendations by the Veerman Commission as an important source of inspiration for the further development of universities of applied sciences and research universities and for strengthening the power and differentiation of the Dutch higher education system. This should result in more options for students and make it easier for them to access education at universities of applied sciences and research universities.

The undersigned seek to further this by investing in a process for the continued development and deepening of the recommendations by the Veerman Commission, with the aim of creating more scope for differentiation and profiling and of promoting equal opportunities and options for students in the system. Part of this includes exploring possibilities for greater depth in education and research at universities of applied sciences within the system, in line with the recommendations by the Veerman Commission, and having a joint vision for the future for the training of teachers. The results of the aforementioned process form the basis for the new *Strategische Agenda Hoger Onderwijs en Onderzoek* (Strategic Agenda for Higher Education and Research) by the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science.

Vereniging van Universiteiten, based in The Hague, acting in this matter as the representative of the universities, as meant in subsections a, b, h, and i of the appendix to the Higher Education and Research Act, represented by:

Pieter Duisenberg

The Minister of Education, Culture and Science, acting as the administrative authority and as the representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands:

Ingrid van Engelshoven

Appendix 1: Effects of quality agreement themes

More intensive and small-scale education

The relationship between teachers and students is crucial for effective education. That is why further intensification of the contact between students and teachers is important. This can be achieved, for example, by committing to smaller teaching groups and the formation of communities, and by making more time available for personal feedback and individual supervision. To achieve this, the student-teacher ratio needs to be reduced. Appointing more teachers also makes it possible to link the teaching content to societal themes and research, increasing curiosity among students and enhancing their research skills.

More and better supervision of students

It is the responsibility of universities of applied sciences/research universities to offer the same opportunities to all their students, regardless of background, origin, or prior education. This should not only be on an incidental basis, when things look likely to go wrong, but also proactively and structurally. One way of attaining this would be through intensive supervision by and support from professionally trained tutors, for example, study advisors, psychologists, deans, and study-career supervisors. Better supervision prevents problems and ensures the best-possible development of every student.

Student success rates

Every student with the right abilities should have the chance to start and complete their studies successfully. A focus on progressing from one study level to the next and accessibility to education for secondary education (VO) and secondary vocational education (MBO) students, equal opportunities, including higher education, preventing students from dropping out, and promoting student success rates remain important themes in higher education. Based on analyses of student success rates from among its students, an institute may decide to target its attention at certain groups of students and/or degree programmes, and formulate objectives accordingly.

Educational differentiation

Universities of applied sciences/research universities respond to the different backgrounds and ambitions of students and the needs of the labour market. They do so by offering a varied range of educational programmes at different levels (AD, BA, MA). Investments are also being made in talent programmes, such as 'honours' programmes or those in the field of social involvement, for example, or business, art, or sport.

Universities of applied sciences/research universities can also differentiate themselves in terms of teaching concepts.

Appropriate and good-quality educational facilities

It is important that study facilities and infrastructure promote intensive and small-scale education. Digital sources could be integrated into the education process even more effectively; students should be able to make optimum use of their educational environments, physical and digital alike, during the course of their studies. Study facilities and infrastructure should be relevant to the needs of education of the future.

Improving the professional qualities of teachers

Good and involved teachers are the key to high-quality education. Efforts could be made at improving the professional qualities of teachers. This should also include greater appreciation of the work of teachers, by placing greater emphasis on teaching performance at university level, for example. Teachers should also be kept up-to-date with the most recent developments from a substantive, didactic, and digital perspective. It would help here if they were able to share their own course material and to use that of others. Teachers should have more opportunities to work on their own development, by carrying out research, for example (in the case of teachers at universities of applied sciences).