

Recognition and Rewards

Radboud University Vision

Recognition & Rewards Committee - Radboud University

Recogn

All employees of Radboud University want to be recognised and rewarded for their work. As Radboud University, we also want to offer this to all our employees. This is not always the case at the moment. That is why we have been working, along with all other Dutch universities, to create a **new balance in academic work and careers since 2019**. On the basis of **the discussion document “You have a part to play”**, we have conducted a broad and intensive dialogue within our university on the subject of Recognition and Rewards. This has produced a clear picture of **the need and options for change**. This vision document is the synthesis of this dialogue and a stepping stone to a programme that will initiate the necessary changes in the system of Recognition and Rewards. These changes apply to all levels and to all employees who contribute to the core tasks of education, research, social impact, leadership, and patient care (in the case of the Faculty of Medical Sciences). While the dialogue started within the academic staff, the changes are crucial for all our employees, so that they can all work with a sense of recognition and appreciation.

This vision was adopted by the Executive Board on Tuesday 14 June 2022.

A goal to work towards

The Recognition and Rewards programme aims to maximise our joint achievement and wellbeing as Radboud University. This goal is based on four pillars. We embrace a balanced understanding of **quality** that recognises and rewards the roles of staff — education, research, leadership, social impact, and patient care — in a balanced way. We achieve this quality by **working together** to create a whole that is more than the sum of its individual achievements. Within this partnership, all employees, with all their **diverse** talents, interests, and backgrounds, are given the opportunity to contribute and be involved. In doing so, we explicitly focus on the **human dimension**, so that we can all work in a healthy, safe, and balanced way. We explicitly strive to ensure that every step of the Recognition and Rewards process, these four pillars reinforce each other and actions related to one pillar do not come at the

expense of other pillars. An important part of this concerns workload (human dimension): the changes must lead to a reduction in workload, both in perceived pressure and in actual hours worked. This is the only way we can combine high performance in our tasks with great wellbeing for all employees.

What changes are needed?

A new balance in Recognition and Rewards includes changes in both the organisation and the academic culture. Such changes require clear principles and good practices that are effectively applied and embedded in theory and practice. This vision document supports this new balance by outlining a spectrum for each of the four pillars: from **where we are now** to **where we want to be**. The current situation — the starting point — will be different for everyone, and not everyone is at the same point on the spectrum.

However, we must look beyond our own situation. It is about the common goal: we want to get the whole university community on board and make the vision of the future a reality for everyone. This requires mutual understanding, consideration for the diversity of perspectives and, above all, a joint effort by supervisors and employees, academic staff, support staff, and management staff.

Quality

We need a different, richer understanding of quality. This also includes a different way of measuring, focusing on peer review, in-depth analysis, development, and discussion.

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<p>Quality is measured without regard to the quality of the content, the actual impact, or the individual contribution. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – performance of employees based on context-free tables, unweighted counts, and shallow criteria; – number of publications, citations, PhD candidates, and obtained grants; – scores from course evaluations and number of courses taught; – academic rank or years of managerial experience; – amount of valorisation activities and visibility. 	<p>Quality is measured through a good balance between qualitative and quantitative measures. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – functioning on the basis of discussions with supervisors, colleagues, and students; – content analysis of, and discussion about, the quality of research; – vision for education and discussions with students and colleagues; – management skills and interests, as demonstrated in evaluations and discussions; – actual impact as demonstrated by validated metrics, including frequency and usage experience.
<p>Assessment of quality by one individual supervisor, based on impressions and performance indicators, without dialogue with the employee, colleagues, or other parties involved.</p>	<p>Assessment of quality based on discussion and analysis by a diverse group consisting of colleagues, subordinates, supervisor(s), and national/international parties involved.</p>
<p>Impersonal, generally applicable criteria, quantity over quality. A great emphasis on who is the fastest and has done the most, with less attention paid to quality, possible external factors, or neglected tasks.</p>	<p>Balance between quantity and quality, with attention to the individual. Looking at the quality of work in a national and international context, the role of the individual and the trajectory towards it, including possible facilitating and hindering factors.</p>
<p>Monitoring the performance of employees is primarily used for assessment and control purposes. There is little investment in staff with temporary contracts.</p>	<p>Performance monitoring is used to actively support employees in their professional development, including those on temporary contracts.</p>
<p>Promotions usually take place on the basis of external factors (e.g. research grant, offer elsewhere) or if room arises in the staffing system. Employees must comply with complex and arbitrary lists of criteria.</p>	<p>Professional development and quality of contribution is the basis of promotion. The basis for this is a personal plan, which unites the ambitions of the employee with the mission and needs of the organisation.</p>
<p>Concentration over dispersion: in cases of equal suitability, previous success is usually the deciding factor, so that success accumulates in the few who already have it (the Matthew effect). Those who have just missed the boat will see their chances of future success significantly reduced.</p>	<p>Dispersion over concentration: in cases of equal suitability, content, available time, and distribution of success are decisive. Resources, positions, and prizes that bring great benefit are spread across the pool of possible candidates.</p>

Collaboration

We need a clear shift from the current emphasis on the individual to an emphasis on collaboration:

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Primarily selection and assessment based on individual qualities, with limited attention to collaboration and social skills or to complementarity and contributions to the team.	Selection and assessment is based on a combination of individual performance and performance of the team as a whole.
Much explicit (e.g. through internal grant rounds) and implicit competition (e.g. through widely publicised individual successes) within and between units. Extreme competition for scarce resources means that time, talent, and organisational capacity are wasted.	Activities, resources, and communication are used to stimulate productive collaboration . Instead of internal competition, mission, strategy, balance, and dialogue form the basis for selection. As far as communication is concerned, content, collaboration, and the personal side are put first.
Substantial emphasis on permanent staff and professors in participational bodies and committees, which is not representative of the organisation. The result is that a small part of the staff is overworked and has disproportionate influence.	Representative involvement in policy making from all parts of the organisation , including temporary contract workers, young employees and support staff, so that all perspectives are included in policies to be implemented.
Substantial emphasis on an individual “save-yourself” and “prove-yourself” culture, partly due to limited coaching and training of beginning lecturers and researchers.	Joint support, coaching, and training of employees , especially for those without a permanent contract.
Supervisors are often appointed top-down, with little or no input from the unit to be managed. Supervisors are usually not selected on the basis of affinity. There is one dominant style of leadership.	Support for the supervisor in the team is important when appointing and evaluating supervisors. The guiding principles are “the right person in the right place” and “distribution of supervisory responsibilities”.
Contributions to committees, peer feedback, and communal activities, known as “academic citizenship”, are seen as a waste of time, have no impact on careers and may even damage them.	“Academic citizenship” is valued as crucial for the quality and functioning of the organisation and as such is given sufficient time and space.
Sharing educational and research material and helping others does not advance one’s career, but rather damages it and helps other competitors.	Sharing educational and research material (Open Science) is a crucial part of our social impact and is actively facilitated. Helping each other is a sine qua non to working at our university.

Diversity

In addition to attention to **diversity and inclusion in the broad sense**, a shift from an emphasis on one type of career to various career possibilities is needed, where a good match between the wishes and needs of the organisation and the wishes of and possibilities for employees is key.

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<p>One type of career is the norm, with the focus on publications and research grants.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Teaching is a secondary matter, and too much attention to it can even hamper one's career. Failure to succeed in research means being forced to do more teaching. – Management tasks are considered an afterthought and academic staff are neither prepared for them nor selected based on them. – Social impact is a secondary matter and applied academics are "inferior". 	<p>There are several career paths, focused on tasks in our organisation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Teaching is equal to research and, in conjunction with research, the basis for a career. – Good leadership is necessary for the proper functioning of the organisation. Employees with affinity are selected and prepared based on that. – Social impact, including patient care, is a core task and offers career opportunities.
<p>Homogeneous selection and promotion policy, focusing on individual excellence, especially in research, agreements with the supervisor, and a competitive approach, without considering the team contribution, the organisation, or diversity in tasks.</p>	<p>Selection and promotion based on the qualities needed by the team and the organisation to perform tasks together in education, research, leadership, impact, and patient care. This also requires inherent diversity in personal characteristics: a collaborative, safe organisation benefits from a diverse workforce.</p>
<p>There is a standard ratio of teaching/research time, with little or no time provided for management tasks, impact, and academic citizenship. A change of focus is often a punitive measure (e.g. publication points not achieved in time, grant not received), not a wish or a plan. Early successes are a strong determiner for future opportunities.</p>	<p>The amount of time spent on tasks varies between employees and for an employee over time, depending on the employee's interests, affinities, and competences and the needs of the team or organisation. A change of focus takes place on the basis of a clear plan, with a long-term perspective, and without closing off other paths.</p>
<p>Tasks, roles, and positions are imposed as a default and/or top-down, without regard for the interests or traits of the person. Task loads and criteria are sharply defined, with no room for creativity or reflection.</p>	<p>Employees feel ownership over their role in the organisation and their work, including the related criteria. Employees feel that they have the space for creative exploration, dialogue, and reflection.</p>

Human dimension

A shift is needed from emphasis on output, reputation, and conservation — at the expense of wellbeing — to wellbeing as the foundation and requirement for output, quality, growth. This requires:

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The norm is to be an academic 24/7 and “being busy” is a status symbol. An academic career requires many personal sacrifices. The organisation abuses the intrinsic motivation of its employees.	An academic career can be in healthy balance with a private life. The organisation is actively engaged in achieving this balance through policy, facilitation, and by setting an example. Employee motivation is rewarded.
An often insecure, closed academic culture, in which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It is difficult to give feedback on performance, especially to supervisors. – Feedback is often harsh and critical. Things are never good or good enough. – There is little room for emotion and empathy; the emphasis is on reason. 	A safe and open academic culture , in which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – It is normal to provide each other with feedback, regardless of position or rank. – Feedback is always constructive. – Vulnerability and emotion are part of the learning and working process. – The vulnerability and dependence of temporary staff receives extra attention.
A lot of organisational control on actions with small consequences (e.g. travel expenses claims) and often blind trust in actions with large consequences (e.g. counsellors and supervisors).	High confidence in actions with minor consequences, appropriate frameworks, reporting, and evaluation for actions with major consequences.
Strongly hierarchical organisation, explicit and implicit. There are big differences between staff with permanent and temporary contracts and between high and low job profiles, in terms of participation, social interaction, and resource distribution.	Equal dialogue and collaboration between senior/junior staff and academic staff/support staff , with all groups learning from each other in terms of content, skills, and perspective.
Procedures and personnel officers provide little protection for the “weak” in the organisation and significant protection for professors and supervisors. Social dysfunction, especially of employees with status, is insufficiently recognised and has few or no consequences.	Procedures and personnel officers focus on balancing power in the organisation and protecting the “weak”. The safe environment is paramount : the organisation looks for structural solutions in case of staff dysfunction, regardless of status.
Much uncertainty for those with temporary contracts, where employees are pushed to the limit to secure their contracts.	Taking into account the effects of uncertainty on the wellbeing and functioning of employees: make clear agreements and offer permanent contracts more quickly.

Pitfalls and opportunities

Changing a culture and an organisation does not happen by itself. There are obstacles to overcome and pitfalls to avoid. But there are also opportunities that we can seize to flesh out the vision of Recognition and Rewards and put it into practice.

PITFALL

The focus is on exceptional, positive examples to show that a lot is already happening. The result is that the perceived urgency is diminished, so that issues are resolved only to a limited extent. Those involved boast about what they are already doing well and point to others when things are going wrong.

Successful members of the academic community in the current system are concerned about the effects on their own success and status. The discussion has an individual emphasis.

Recognition and Rewards is discussed and decided top-down. Employees are involved late, with limited influence or in an unsafe way. As a result, a large part of the problem is ignored due to the differences in perspective.

More attention is paid to the structural and cognitive aspects of Recognition and Rewards, as expressed in procedures and rules, rather than to practical experiences. The result is that things change on paper, and hardly at all in the workplace. The existing culture is tolerant of policy changes that are limited in practice and even structurally undermined.

Managers cite lack of resources and precedents as arguments for not taking action and maintaining the status quo. Promotion and participation of employees is subconsciously seen as a threat to one's own ambitions and reputation.

Policies are proposed and implemented with good intentions, but there is little or no follow-up and evaluation. Perverse implementations or undesirable consequences that negate the original intentions become part of the system and prove very difficult to reverse.

Units and individuals hide behind academic freedom and their own autonomy and working methods as an argument for not learning from each other or implementing common policies. As a result, substantial differences remain between units, including in the extent to which malpractice is actually addressed.

OPPORTUNITY

Attention is paid to both positive and negative examples as well as to opportunities and difficulties, so that there is a **balanced overview** of the state of affairs in the entire organisation. All **those involved step forward** and openly admit that they themselves can also do things better.

All members of the academic community focus as much as possible on the collective and look for ways to make the **common outcome and wellbeing as good as possible**.

There is **inclusive, safe dialogue with staff** that directly influences policy, with consultation between different groups within the university community. This leads to greater mutual understanding and joint action.

Discrepancies between policies, rules, and procedures on the one hand and daily practice on the other are recognised. Organisational and cultural **changes** are actively discussed and worked **at all levels of the university**. Difficult subjects are discussed in order to achieve change through strife.

Supervisors recognise that many measures require more will and courage than money and time. Artificial scarcity (e.g. restriction on ius promovendi) is addressed. The effect is increased support for supervisors and a better workplace for everyone.

We pay attention both to the intentions and to the desired and undesired effects of choices made. **Change is a process that is closely monitored and, if necessary, adjusted.** We are specifically alert to the creation of more workload (net) and unnecessary additional control mechanisms.

Units and individuals recognise the differences as well as the fundamental similarities and work together on the challenges of Recognition and Rewards. This involves **mutual learning, active exchange** within and between faculties and, where appropriate, joint policy-making. We have a principled and responsible understanding of academic freedom.

What can I do?

Recognition and Rewards is a theme that concerns us all, as individuals and as a collective. *Working on* Recognition and Rewards requires us to pay conscious attention to the human dimension, the diversity of perspectives, the need for collaboration and a shared idea of when things are going well and the desired quality is being delivered. Thus, working towards Recognition and Rewards requires all of us to do it. We invite everyone to take the first step and talk about this vision, to think and plan together and, where possible, to act and work accordingly.

This bottom-up involvement is crucial to the success of the new Recognition and Rewards. In doing so, we are taking the first step towards a long-term change process and creating the foundation for good implementation of a shared policy plan. Only together can we find the right balance between the four lines of change (quality, collaboration, diversity, and human dimension) to realise a new, balanced system of Recognition and Rewards at all levels and for all employees of our university.

