

Manifesto

for future excellence education

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Manifesto	1
1. Introduction	2
2. Undertaking	5
3. Signposts	7
4. Networks	26

Manifesto

Learning is a personal journey

Encourage students to find their personal drive and help them discover and channel their passions. Create space for curiosity and ambition, but also for chance, as this can lead to new, unexpected insights. Offer students a community in which they can work together and in which they can inspire one another.

Play a role in society

Give students the opportunity to learn and at the same time make a contribution to society. Teach them to recognise social challenges, to investigate these and work towards solutions. In this way, excellence programmes contribute to the moulding of responsible citizens who feel involved in society and are able to contribute.

Language development starts with the lecturer

Enable lecturers to discover talent and allow it to blossom and give the lecturer the professional scope needed to do so. The open, innovative nature of excellence programmes requires a didactics of excellence that stimulates students to discover their passions. The demands made of lecturers in this are great. Dare to pick a didactic method that promotes broad development. The development of talent among lecturers is also part of the development of excellence..

Retaining excellence programmes as a hotbed of innovation

Use excellence programmes to experiment with new forms of education. Cherish this space and ensure that students and lecturers continue to retain this freedom of movement. Avoid ring-fenced teaching programmes. Ensure good links to the standard teaching programmes, so that the education can benefit from these experiments and this innovation as a whole.

Talent in primary education becomes excellence in higher education

Retain and develop the learning networks that have arisen between higher education institutions within the Sirius Programme. Organise the cooperation within the educational chain (primary education, secondary education, intermediate professional education, higher professional education, university education), so that better connections can be made between educational sectors in relation to excellence, thereby creating an inspirational culture of education.

Work with employers to offer challenging learning environments

Make it possible for students to learn in realistic contexts. To this end, involve the professional field intensively in excellence programmes and ensure that students can observe, take part and contribute in the working environment to solutions for issues that have an impact on employers and top sectors.

Alumni are educational capital

Ensure that graduates of excellence programmes continue to feel affiliated to their programme. Based on their experiences, they will be able to relate what the added value of excellence has meant to their development as a professional and act as role models for new students. Honours alumni are the ambassadors of excellence.

1. Introduction

Below you will find the *Manifesto for Future Excellence in Education*, containing pointers towards the agenda of the excellence in higher education movement. These pointers have been formulated on the basis of debates conducted both by representatives of the Sirius Bodies¹ and many other parties involved in the development of programmes of excellence in higher education.

Background

The end of 2014 brought the end of the subsidy period for the bodies within the Sirius Programme. The Sirius Programme was implemented by the National Platform Science & Technology on behalf of the Dutch Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The Platform was allowed by the ministry to continue in 2015 to facilitate the Sirius Network that had grown up.

More than twenty higher education institutes participate in the programme. Each of these bodies has developed its own vision of excellence, designed and implemented excellence programmes, carried out research, set up education for lecturers, shared experience and knowledge and cooperated with other institutions. In so doing, universities of applied sciences and other universities have worked towards a change of culture. This has contributed to the culture of study in the Netherlands becoming ever more ambitious.

Sirius Programme

The aim of the Sirius Programme is to promote an ambitious culture of study in the Netherlands. This follows on from a tradition that started at the end of the last century with cooperation between a number of universities around the theme of excellence and to which policymakers responded around the turn of the century: excellence now occupies a prominent position within the political agenda. This is demonstrated in part by the work of the Ministerial Committee 'Making Space for Talent' (Dutch: 'Ruim Baan voor Talent', also known as the Korthals Committee 2004-2007), which was charged with investigating whether and to what extent modulation of educational profiles could result in better matches between students and programmes. In 2010, the Higher Education and Research Funding Act (Dutch: WHW) was amended in line with the recommendations of the Korthals Committee. Not long afterwards, the profile report by the Veerman Committee appeared and a Review Committee (the Van Vught Committee) was set up by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, with the aim of inducing higher education to implement serious performance agreements in relation to the quality of education.

The assignment given by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science to the National Platform Science & Technology in 2008 also fitted into a political agenda focussed on excellence: create an organisation that can help higher education institutions mentor their more talented students. A

¹ *The institutions participating in the Sirius Programme are: Utrecht University of Applied Sciences, Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, Noordelijke Hogeschool Leeuwarden, Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Saxion/Edith Stein, ArteZ, Amsterdam School of the Arts, Driestar Christian University, Delft University of Technology, Eindhoven University of Technology, Tilburg University, Leiden University, University of Amsterdam, VU University, University of Groningen, Wageningen University, Maastricht University, Erasmus University, Radboud University Nijmegen, Utrecht University.*

start-up subsidy was allocated for this, along with an explicit condition that these resources must be used to promote initiatives concerning quality improvement in such a way that these would ultimately – by the end of the programme in 2014 – become part of the standard curricula of institutions. The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science invested almost 50 million Euros through the Sirius Programme in the development of excellence programmes.

The focus of the Sirius Programme is on the one hand on the (individual) ambitions and institution-wide vision of the institutions and the (feasibility of) the performances they wish to achieve. On the other hand, the teaching function of the Programme as a whole is central. Within this framework, Sirius has worked in recent years on a community of participating and interested institutions focussed on the acquisition and sharing of knowledge, which allows them to learn from themselves and from others. Assuming that a certain critical mass is required to bring about a change of culture, the quantitative target has been set at 5% participation of students in excellence programmes. Each year, progress is measured within the participating institutions in relation to the agreements these have entered into themselves by means of a monitor & audit system geared to the double focus of the programme.

The end of the subsidy period for the institutions within the Sirius Programme is fast approaching and gives cause to think about the question of how excellence in higher education can develop further. The desire to reinforce and where possible expand the network of universities of applied sciences and other universities that has grown up enjoys broad support. The end of the Sirius subsidies marks the transition to a long-lasting network and a sustainable form of cooperation.

The agenda for the development of excellence is still extremely fluid, making this an important moment to examine where we are and what still needs to be done.

Excellence Summit

The Excellence Summit on 2 October 2014 in Amsterdam's RAI conference centre, on the eve of the close of the subsidy period, is being organised in the tradition of the Sirius Carrousel. In order to create a stimulating environment for the exchange of knowledge from the start of Sirius, universities (of applied science) have taken turns organising conferences and work meetings geared to the exchange of visions and practices. In 2012 and 2013, these meetings were followed up by two ambitious international conferences lasting several days, at the Hanze University of Applied Sciences in Groningen and Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences respectively.

Now it is the turn of Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences, in cooperation with the Sirius Programme. Owing to the exceptional nature of this Summit, i.e. the end of the subsidy period for the Sirius Programme, the HvA and the Sirius Programme have decided to start an unusual initiative. We will celebrate the successes of recent years while at the same time looking forward. We have now entered a transitional phase, in which we have a new dot on the horizon to head for and in which the networks that have grown up between universities (of applied sciences) in relation to excellence are being consolidated. **The central question now is 'how can we (the education sector, trade and industry and government bodies) continue together to create a permanent place for the promotion of excellence in education, to make education as a whole stronger and more ambitious?'**

Right from the start, it was clear to the organisers of the Summit that this would be a joint undertaking, in which all Sirius partners would be involved and which would involve not only the organisation of a conference, but also a reinforcement of the network of collaborating universities (of applied sciences). In the next section, we will report on this undertaking. First, however, we will discuss the vision of excellence we worked with.

What is excellence in higher education?

Within the Sirius Programme, every institution has developed its own vision of excellence. This vision is based on the identity and mission of the university of applied sciences or university. The Sirius audit committee noted in its audit report for 2013 that two views of excellence exist side by side. The first – and the most original – is related to the need to adjust the organisational context of universities of applied science and universities in such a way that students are stimulated to get the best out of themselves. The focus in this case is principally on *the development of talent*; the educational institution concerned offers education in which all students can perform to the best of their ability, independently of how much talent they have. The second view talks about *excellent students* as an exceptional category of individuals that have to date not received the special attention they deserve. The focus here is on students with above-average talent and motivation who perform to an exceptionally high level that exceeds simply getting high marks in a regular programme.

We came across a third view of excellence during the debates. This is a view of excellence in which *highly motivated students learn to stray off the beaten track*. According to this view, excellence programmes are, in addition to places for more in-depth education, also places where experiments can take place with new forms of education and with new visions of learning.

Students have regularly stated that they do not relate to the word *excellence*, which they associate with terms such as ‘spotlight’ and ‘elite’. They feel more affinity with concepts such as: relevance, freedom, responsibility, social commitment, off the beaten track, going your own way and innovation. This was the case for students at both higher professional education level and at academic level. On the one hand, students want to explore their fields in depth, which could mean both purely intellectual challenges and going into greater depth in professional practice as a future professional. On the other hand, students seek additional challenges within a much broader social context, by working on assignments they consider relevant to society. This also appeals to a group of students that do not immediately identify with the label *excellent*, but who do aim to commit themselves fully to something outside of the regular programme that they find intensely stimulating.

In the debates conducted, which formed the basis for this manifesto, these views were aired and discussed extensively. These various opinions can exist side by side and add to one another. The approach of the Sirius Programme has always been to link these opinions together in order to elevate higher education as a whole to a higher level.

2. Undertaking

Writing a manifesto for the future of excellence in education is not an undertaking you embark upon alone. In order to identify the most important issues, four regional debates were organised in the spring of 2014. Almost all of the Sirius institutions were involved in the organisation of these evenings. A huge debt of gratitude is owed to the hosts and hostesses of these evenings: colleagues from the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, Tilburg University, Leiden University and Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences. Together with Sirius partners from the same region², they received many students, lecturers, managers and representatives of social organisations, political parties and the professional field to enter into discussion about the development of talent and excellent students.

Each table had its own *couleur locale*, but the assignment for each table was the same: to design excellence education for the future.

Table concept

Colourful experiences were gathered through a methodical approach – the ‘table concept’³, adapted by Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences for the regional debates. Assisted by questions, assignments and canvasses, participants debated with one another to design the building blocks for the manifesto. Conclusions from one debate were passed on and further elaborated in a subsequent debate. The debates were structured by questions and assignments and were supervised by trained moderators. This concept provided a guideline for an exciting journey through the country and led to a result that can be seen as co-creation: a result owned jointly by all.

The questions at the tables concerning excellence were approached from different perspectives: the individual learning requirements of students, relevance to education and the change of study culture, the interests of the professional field and relevance to society. A retrospective look was taken at the insights developed in recent years in relation to excellence, and success stories were shared. A number of these are described in this manifesto.

A report was drawn up of the outcomes of each debate and following the final debate, the results were brought together and conclusions drawn: these are the foundations of this manifesto. A film was also made of each debate, containing a number of characteristic statements. These short films can be found at the summit website (www.hva.nl/summitexcellentie).

The guests at the tables

More than three hundred guests were welcomed to the four regional debates. The debate tables, with approximately six to eight participants per table, were put together with the most varied possible combinations. At the tables, there were students, lecturers, managers and members of staff of

² The debate in Groningen was organised by the Hanze University of Applied Sciences, RUG, Saxion and the NHL. Table Tilburg was organised by Tilburg University, Eindhoven University of Technology, ArtEZ Institute of the Arts, Utrecht University and Maastricht University.

Table Leiden was organised by Leiden University, Delft University of Technology and Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

Table Amsterdam was organised by the HvA, UvA, VU, HU and AHK.

³ The tables concept was developed by Pakhuis de Zwijger in Amsterdam, with the aim of allowing the various parties from the urban environment to enter into discussions with one another.

the affiliated institutions. In addition, representatives of other educational institutions were invited: from primary education, secondary education and intermediate professional education. In the debate, these partners from the educational chain stated how they experience the developments in higher education and stressed the great importance of good connection for students, including in relation to excellence education.

Other important partners in the discussions at the table were the participants from the trade and industry sector, government bodies and the political parties. For instance, employers and managers from companies with which a lot of cooperation takes place were present. After all, they have a great need for talented, superbly prepared students with the ambition to excel in their work. The table at Tilburg University was organised in cooperation with the high-tech businesses of Brainport Eindhoven. There were politicians from local authorities who talked about the significance and possibilities of excellence for (local) government. Representatives of non-profit institutions which entrust challenging assignments to excellent students within excellence programmes also took part. In short, a varied group, with whom stimulating discussions took place, with a range of results.

Table 0

The undertaking started with Table 0. This table was made up of students, alumni, people from trade and industry, managers of honours colleges, universities and universities of applied sciences and experts from the Sirius Programme.

Table 0 met twice. The first time upon the commencement of the process, prior to the regional debates. During this meeting, they gave the start signal by setting out the major areas of focus for the debates. They then continued to demonstrate their commitment throughout the undertaking. The second meeting took place after the debates; the members of Table 0 discussed the results and conclusions of the debates and gave their vision of these. The expertise of Table 0 is reflected in the manifesto.

The result

This manifesto is the result of the table discussions. It is our hope that this publication will be both a source of inspiration and a guideline for the future of excellence education, allowing work to continue on the basis of the great efforts made and successes achieved in higher education in recent years. Like the discussion of excellence education itself, this publication is not a final destination but a living document making a contribution to the ongoing stimulation of excellence education within the educational system. Below, we will discuss the seven signposts of the manifesto in greater detail.

3. Signposts

Learning is a personal journey

Encourage students to find their own personal drive and help them discover and channel their passion. Create space in this process for curiosity and ambition, but also for chance, as this can lead to new, unexpected insights. Offer students a community in which they can cooperate and in which they can inspire one another.

Many excellence programmes offer students a space in which they can choose freely to focus in greater depth on particular aspects of complex questions that are not or cannot be covered within the regular curriculum, or in any event are not covered in such a way that students are able to make their own mark on the process and product. Students are also permitted to undertake research at an early stage. This teaches students to rely increasingly on their own sense of direction, and to formulate and pursue their own ambitions. Education is seen by these students as the sum of possibilities for personal development. They are less and less concerned with where and how this learning takes place: the main thing is that learning takes place and that this takes place as an individual process. This helps them discover and give direction to their passion and has a motivating effect in relation to the programme as a whole.

Not all students have insight into their own talents. Every student can sometimes use some encouragement from the teacher. Talent development and the stimulation of talent were discussed at length at all of the debate evenings. Education should – much more than is currently the case – be geared to making the most of the talent of every student. This calls for an individual approach; talent does not emerge at the same moment in every student. Talent often needs time to ripen. Intensive following of the development of students, in combination with good discussion, is a major element in helping students discover their talent.

The conviction that learning in excellence programmes is to a significant extent a *personal journey*, is supported by the experience that excellent students flourish when the set curriculum is let go. This also shows that the set curriculum insufficiently allows students to design their own (learning) journey. We therefore also call for the continuation of offering freedom to students within excellence programmes, as well as investigating whether students could also profit from greater freedom of choice in relation to the curriculum within regular programmes: flexible learning routes suit a future in which learning and working are a continuous process, of which every citizen is an architect.

Students should not make their (learning) journey alone, however, but preferably as part of a group of fellow travellers. In education, such groups are referred to as communities. Students with similar approaches and interests study together and are interesting conversation partners for one another. The recognition that another also has a desire to explore topics more and in greater depth is also stimulating. We will discuss the role of the lecturer in this (learning) journey below.

Call

Students, don't let others think for you: look for your talent and find out where you perform best. Surprise yourself! This is one of the key messages of this signpost – a message coupled with a call to be curious, to follow your own passion and take responsibility for this. Learning is not without obligation. Everyone has talents: get the most from these during your own personal (learning) journey.

Lecturers make this journey possible, by challenging students, by having great expectations, offering intensive support and giving high-quality feedback. Learning to give students space and to trust and follow them takes energy. This is almost the complete opposite of what lecturers are used to doing in normal education, where the agenda is set by content and learning targets. It demands flexibility on the part of the educational organisation to let go of this agenda and create frameworks that guarantee freedom.

One of these frameworks is the accreditation framework. The government is being asked to ascertain the extent to which the accreditation framework is satisfactory for excellence education and whether an addition can be made in the form of a framework for excellence, within which personal learning by the student is central.

The government should give talented students the time to develop their talent and not restrict them through the over-rigid enforcement of study periods as a management instrument. Extra tuition fees should also not be required of students in excellence programmes, but rather contributions and/or encouragement given to students to participate in these programmes.

From the table discussions:

“The really excellent students don't need a special process. They develop by themselves. The ideal process is a process with no boundaries”.

From the table discussions:

“Excellent students already excel in their specialist field – this should be broadened to their personal development. Students must be able to recognise the type of person they are and how they can perform to the best of their ability”.

From the table discussions:

“Talent must be recognised and rewarded: in standard education this means everyone's talent, in excellence it refers to above-average talent”.

University of Groningen

The University of Groningen Honours College offers a university-wide Master's Honours programme with the theme '*Leadership; making the difference*'.

This honours programme encourages Master's students to undertake a personal learning journey. The student formulates using SMARTI (the I is for inspiring!) the learning aims he or she wishes to achieve within this programme, and how he or she wishes to achieve these aims. One student may go for leadership in the academic world, another may start up his or her own business, and a third concentrate on cultural leadership with the aim of reaching the final of a national pop prize, while a fourth may organise a social event centred around a good cause.

On the basis of these learning aims, the student will then determine which leadership master classes based on the theory of knowledge he or she will follow; which skills he or she wishes to focus on in the *Leadership Lab*; what aspect of personal development he or she wishes to focus on in the workshop, and how he or she will demonstrate what he or she has learned in his or her final masterwork.

The student will record these learning aims in his or her starting document, a compulsory part of the electronic portfolio. It is a best practice at the Faculty of Letters that this starting document is discussed with fellow students in an intervision meeting. This allows 'travel communities' of students involved in one another's learning processes to form. During the programme, these students will meet at various times to exchange experiences and ask one another about developments towards reaching their personal learning aims. The Letters honours coordinator coaches the students throughout this learning process.

At the end of the learning journey, the student will reflect on his or her personal learning aims and the journey he or she has made through the honours programme. This reflection is also part of the student's portfolio.

In this way, every student in the Master's honours programme makes his or her own learning journey, accompanied a different stages of this journey by fellow travellers from all faculties.

Stand up for society

Give students the opportunity to learn and at the same time make a contribution to society. Teach them to recognise social challenges, to investigate these and work towards solutions. In this way, excellence programmes contribute to the moulding of responsible citizens who feel involved in society and are able to contribute.

Honours programmes in the United States have a long tradition of a major social element – the principle of ‘giving back’. This means that honours students make a contribution to the welfare of a specific group of citizens, provide support to a social organisation, campaign for a good cause, etc. Important themes of these honours programmes include citizenship, ethics and meaning. Following these American examples, many excellence programmes in the Netherlands also have a social component.

During the debates, many students stated that they participated in the excellence programmes in the first place because they wanted to get the most out of their studies for themselves. If the assignments they carry out have a positive impact on society, this makes the programme extra worthwhile. They are therefore not looking for this in itself, but the responsibility they take on through the programme to make a contribution to social challenges has an added value.

The question of the extent to which it is the duty of education to prepare students for their (leading) role in society was discussed. Important questions such as who they want to be and what difference they want to make, often arise in regular education, but often in a limited way. Through the more personal support, the free choice of subject and intensive cooperation with society at large, excellence programmes offer students greater opportunities for broad development.

In principle, the regular curriculum equips students more than sufficiently to start out on the employment market (Ausbildung). Excellence programmes should focus more on broader development (Bildung), by addressing students as members of society, and allowing them to develop strong citizenship competences. In our globalising society, students also need intercultural competences. It is precisely in meeting others and in interdisciplinary cooperation that students get to know their own ‘values’ and learn to appreciate the value of others. By literally undertaking a journey, making international contacts, providing opportunities to get to know others, could therefore be a valuable component of many excellence programmes.

Taking social problems as a starting point, a multidisciplinary approach becomes relevant: in this respect, an excellence programme is less focussed on more in-depth subject knowledge. This is a question of phases, however; without a high degree of competence in the subject, the student will have little to contribute to multidisciplinary cooperations. Sometimes, students go in search of greater depth by withdrawing and studying. This is also of importance for society - there is also a need for specialists and those who think deeply about a particular field.

Call

Study is a privilege and not a duty! It is to be expected that students will take a more active and critical attitude in the light of the new income-contingent loan system. Students will become increasingly aware of the costs/benefits ratio and of the quality of education. The challenge facing students is to make good use of the opportunities offered by education. On the other hand, it is up to the educational institution to make concessions to the demands made by students in terms of the quality of education and the opportunities to excel.

Educational institutions and public and private partners are called upon to enter into an intensive cooperation, particularly in the field of social issues. This is in the interest of the student, as it facilitates innovative and socially relevant research, but it also sets the right example. Educational bodies and the 'customers' – the professional field – can demonstrate that they are at the heart of society and take their social responsibility. The slogan 'being at the heart of society' can be made a reality through more intensive cooperation and opening up companies and institutions to (research) students.

From the table discussions:

"Giving back is a normative concept. It is not the case that excellent students have to give something back to society because of their privileged position, but excelling inherently involves tackling issues that matter."

From the table discussions:

"Receiving an excellent education is a personal privilege and a social investment. This is where the obligation to pass on to others comes from. So excelling should also be possible at an early stage in the school system. Socially relevant issues can be raised at every level."

From the table discussions:

"Excellence is getting the most out of yourself and others."

From the table discussions:

"You can't impose on students up front how explicit the relationship between learning and social relevance has to be. Sometimes students want to withdraw and look for greater depth by withdrawing and studying a narrow subject."

Tilburg University

“The mission for the Tilburg University Outreaching Honours Programme is ‘to understand and impact society’.

Our graduate ‘pracademics’ are infected with ‘noblesse oblige’ for a period of two years. Students fathom out social challenges, because they are able to experience these at first hand from different perspectives. In Outreaching Labs and community projects, they themselves make a difference, by listening, learning, but above all by doing themselves and finding solutions. They experience what it’s like to have an impact themselves, but also that they are actually able to do so. The ‘wow factor’ of this experience inspires them to want to do this more.

Daan Cohen, Outreaching alumnus: “Thanks to Outreaching, I got the chance to travel to India. But such a privilege comes with a certain responsibility. Impressed and overwhelmed by the things I saw there, the people I met and the stories they told, I decided to accept this responsibility and to make sure that others also got a chance to learn. Together with five other Outreaching students, I set up a foundation (www.stichtingdice.nl), through which we collect funds to educate Indian orphans. Not only do we provide scholarships, we are also building a whole new school for no less than 1,400 young children in a village close to Mumbai. They will now get the chance of a decent education, and we learn what’s involved in setting up and running an organisation, and everything this brings. There’s nothing more satisfying than that.”

Talent development starts with the lecturer

Enable lecturers to discover talent and allow it to blossom and give the lecturer the professional scope needed to do so. The open, innovative nature of excellence programmes requires a didactics of excellence that stimulates students to discover their passions. The demands made of lecturers in this are great. Dare to pick a didactic method that promotes broad development. The development of talent among lecturers is also part of the development of excellence.

If learning is a personal journey, it must be made possible for a student to define this personal journey himself or herself. The question that arises is what role the lecturer should play in this. If the lecturer is the travel guide on the student's journey, this will surely not be the classic role of the travel guide shepherding a group of tourists along a number of (well-worn) paths. As described above, the student is the one who should point the way in his or her own learning process. He or she is the one who will go to the lecturer for feedback or for a check on plans made, in order to benefit from the lecturer's expertise. However, this does not mean that the lecturer should stand passively on the side-lines. He or she has an active role in pointing out the roads, the intersections and the destinations. In university education, the professor is often also a passionate researcher who transmits his or her passion for the subject of the research, is able to inspire students, thereby bringing out their talent for research.

To accomplish this, the lecturer must have the courage to see the students as equal partners and allow them, as far as possible, to *choose directions for themselves, while allowing for no ambiguity in relation to the quality that has to be delivered*. This can only be achieved if the lecturer has sufficient confidence in the students' learning process and is close enough to the student to be able to follow their development and give feedback. The relationship between lecturer and student should be characterised by confidence and performance from both sides.

This demands a lot of the excellence lecturer, namely that he or she leave his or her own comfort zone in a teaching situation in which the relationship between student and lecturer is by definition unequal and pre-determined.

The trick is to allow both roles to exist in a balanced relationship to one another. It should be taken into consideration in the assessment how the student has set out their own learning process and how responsibility has been taken for this. The organisation must allow for this more process-oriented form of assessment.

The transition from supply-driven to demand-driven excellence education means the lecturer needs professional scope. This means that the outcomes of the learning process should not be defined in advance. This requires tolerance from educational organisations, which generally speaking need a lot of rules with which to assure quality. Lecturers must therefore be able to count on support and the scope within which to experiment. The evaluation of education is a process to be learned from.

Call

Educational organisations, ensure policy-driven support for your lecturer of excellence! Teaching within an excellence programme makes different demands of a lecturer than teaching in regular education. A vision of education based on these different demands and a competence profile of the lecturer of excellence can serve as a guideline in the educational organisation, both in recruitment and in the development of (ongoing) training.

The policy should also guarantee that lecturers have sufficient professional scope to develop as lecturers of an excellence programme.

Greater attention should be focused in the lecturer training programmes on differentiation within the education provided. The Sirius institutes will play a pioneering role in this by entering into the conversation on this with the lecturer training organisations.

A call on the professional field is to ensure that cooperation with institutions is not limited to students, but that lecturers too are seen as potential partners in concrete assignments. For lecturers, it can be stimulating to work in both education and the professional field. Such dual positions are at present possible only to a very limited extent.

From the table discussions:

"I want to be coached on how I can get the best not only from myself, but also how I can get the best out of someone else, so the team performance is increased even further."

From the table discussions:

"Dual positions for lecturers! It would be ideal if lecturers could both work as lecturers and have a role as a professional in the field they are teaching towards. This would mean they could almost literally bring practical work into the school and vice versa."

From the table discussions:

"The exchange between lecturer and student must be rooted in confidence and in the fact that you are allowed to make mistakes without being punished for this."

Utrecht University

The Teaching Fellowship Programme is an initiative by Utrecht University which rewards excellence in lecturers and stimulates educational quality across a broad approach. The teaching fellows are relieved of some of their duties for a period of two years in order to work on educational innovation within the faculty. They all work on projects aimed at improving the quality of education within their faculties. They also receive a grant of € 5,000 from the Executive Board which they can use at their discretion within the context of their project. The teaching fellows exchange knowledge among themselves and represent the teaching staff within the faculty. The Teaching Fellowship programme has been in place since 2011, when the first group of eight fellows were selected. Since September 2011, they have worked on their projects, as well as contributing to the renewal of education in other ways.

Utrecht University innovates and facilitates the professionalization of teaching staff and creates a climate in which education matters. After all, good education is given by qualified lecturers, who are allowed to constantly improve the education they provide, and to innovate. The Teaching Fellows system is one of the instruments that promotes and values excellence in lecturers. Other such instruments include the basic and senior qualifications, the visiting chair, the teaching awards and the Centre of Excellence in University Teaching (which, among other things organises an Honours Teaching programme).

Retaining excellence programmes as a hotbed of innovation

Use excellence programmes to experiment with new forms of education. Cherish this space and ensure that students and lecturers continue to retain this freedom of movement. Avoid ring-fenced teaching programmes. Ensure good links to the standard teaching programmes, so that the education as a whole can benefit from these experiments and this innovation.

Hotbeds are agile enough to respond rapidly to changes in the professional field and society; at a time when permanent change is the one constant, this is not an optional extra but a must. Hotbeds also offer students a safe environment within which to work on ground-breaking developments without the pressure for immediate results. In an academic context, this often means students can take part in research being undertaken at the university.

An educational organisation that cherishes space for experimentation within its excellence programmes should draw up frameworks that make this possible, starting with a shared vision of talent development and excellence. This shared vision is essential for the implementation of a cohesive educational policy within which the discovery of talent, its encouragement and the freedom granted to this are in harmony. These frameworks are needed to guide action, but should not be restrictive. Additional policy is required to ensure that educational innovations developed within excellence programmes are translated for and implemented in regular education.

In order to function as a hotbed, not only the curriculum should be geared to this; the physical environment must also contribute to the learning environment. The learning environment must be challenging, must contribute to the crucial sense of community and so lead to inspiration and innovation. There is a good reason why many honours academies, programmes, etc., are located in a separate environment. These places can be found within universities or universities of applied sciences, but sometimes also with clients making workspaces available for a limited period.

Call

The end of the subsidy to the institutions within the Sirius Programme means the disappearance of the space to experiment that was organised within the programme. It is important to keep this space for experimentation/hotbed function open, and therefore to reserve resources for this in a structured manner. We therefore call on the managers of educational institutions to continue to invest in innovative practices within education, such as take place within excellence programmes. If education must be innovative and must be able to fulfil the needs of tomorrow, the *space* must be provided within the current frameworks to experiment with this. It is true however that it must be demonstrated what is being achieved through this experimentation from the hotbeds.

The government could facilitate research through the NWO (Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research) by putting out a Call for Proposals aimed at the added value of the hotbeds in education.

Lecturers and students can provide support by expressing the value of excellence programmes in their regular teaching programmes too. The transfer of best practices from excellence programmes is perhaps the best ambassador.

From the table discussions:

“In a creative / innovative process, the starting point should be the autonomous strength of the participants; you should also have the courage to reverse the roles; the student can be a master in the teaching process and the lecturer an apprentice.”

From the table discussions:

“Lecturers and students must have the freedom to deviate from the ‘norm’. In terms of ideas that would otherwise not arise. The exchange between lecturer and student should be rooted in confidence and in the fact that it is acceptable to make mistakes, without being punished for this.”

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences (HR) has a powerful learning environment designed around HR-wide minors offered as ‘minor+’, which function as an Innovation Lab: the student takes the lead in the issue at hand. Every student can enrol, provided it is clear what role the discipline plays. The complex issue is central to this, rather than ‘in-depth’ or ‘broader’ knowledge. The issue raised by the external problem owner motivates the student to ask questions, search for knowledge and obtain skills in order to understand the issue and be able to start to tackle it.

All possible forms of didactic work are involved in this: from ‘sitting on your hands’ (lecturers) to just-in-time supply. The issue determines what is necessary and students from different programmes work together. There is little in the way of programme, there is some structure, there is a great deal of scope within which to work, there are external or internal experts who can contribute knowledge, and there is coaching.

Alumni have stated that in particular pushing against your own limitations and nevertheless wanting to finish the assignment have been the most useful lessons for them – lessons they still put to good use in practice. The knowledge obtained may now be (extremely) outdated, but the will to continue with the issue remains.

Examples

Minor+ Silicon Venturing Rotterdam, in cooperation with the Innovative Business Knowledge Centre. Students, lecturers and professors work with existing Rotterdam-based businesses to translate knowledge and models from Silicon Valley into promising business models for start-ups: this is known as Silicon Ventures Rotterdam. Parallel to and alongside these Rotterdam businesses, these start-ups are established to operate as small-scale, high-risk enterprises. One client for this is a Rotterdam hospital.

Minor+ Meedoen op Zuid (Taking Part in Zuid), in cooperation with the Talent Development Knowledge Centre. In multidisciplinary student teams, work is undertaken on current developments in Care & Wellbeing, whereby the Rotterdam Zuid district is used as a laboratory. New neighbourhood-level interventions, methods and administrative models are developed, in which ‘standing on your own two feet’ is central. The minor+ works with a host of clients in the Zuid district of Rotterdam.

Talent in primary education becomes excellence in higher education

Retain and develop the learning networks that have arisen between higher education institutions within the Sirius Programme. Organise the cooperation within the educational chain (primary education, secondary education, intermediate professional education, higher professional education, university education), so that better connections can be made between educational sectors in relation to excellence, thereby creating an inspirational culture of education.

During the debates, the connections between types of education were repeatedly raised. These connections are by no means always good, and this can put students off. The student's learning process should be much more central, and the transitions between types of education much smoother. Excellence programmes could help improve these connections. How this can be done precisely is still in development, but the first steps have been taken (see the practical examples).

Students are interested in the linkage between learning and working. Excellent students inhabit two worlds – that of the school and the professional field. How many students have an almost full-time job (or their own business) alongside their studies? These worlds should be brought closer together, avoiding the abrupt full stop that follows the completion of the period of education. It is important in this respect that the difference between the educational sectors is mentioned, as this exists in the Netherlands. Higher professional education is all about training (excellent) professional practitioners, which means that the relationship to the professional field is different from that in the Bachelor's phase of a university education. The various different routes must be attractive for students, in order that they can develop their talents to the full.

Students, lecturers and managers all state that excellence education must also encompass 'life-long learning'. Learning does not stop as soon as the official programme of education has been completed. The whole chain should devote greater attention to this, and to the linkage between the various educational sectors and stakeholders: primary education, pre-professional secondary education/intermediate professional education, secondary education, higher education, the professional field. Think in boxes less and make use of the networks that already exist.

Research is a major pillar of excellence education throughout the chain. Although this is a core value of university education, attention is also devoted to research in many excellence programmes within higher professional education. An excellent student will often have a curious, research-oriented nature; it should be possible to nurture these qualities throughout the chain.

Call

Lecturers, get to know your colleagues from the programmes that feed yours, as well as your colleagues from the programmes your students go on to. Excellence programmes should be able to latch on to subsequent programmes, in such a way that pupils or students can benefit from these when setting out on their next educational path. This means a call to design educational systems that really take the individual development of a pupil/student into account.

A call to involve the professional field more in education should also be made here. At the end of the day, what counts is life-long learning, where you leave education ready to enter the employment market and continue to learn throughout your working life. It is extremely important that cooperation between the professional field and education is stimulated in this respect – and this includes primary education.

The government also has a role to play in the promotion of coordination within the educational chain. Free up funds for regional and national initiatives that promote excellence in education, in particular between educational sectors.

From the table discussions:

“Learning at the heart of society: to bring work and learning together more, we no longer think in institutional terms (programmes, businesses), but rather we place a knowledge demand at the centre and bring forces together around this issue.”

From the table discussions:

“The connection between working and learning has the nature of permanent education. When you are forty, you learn differently from when you were twenty; what is the learning environment/range of options on offer like for these (and other) ages? What role can excellence education play in this?”

National Ballet Academy

Great talents in the fields of ballet or music often reveal themselves at a young age. Children who have this passion, as well as the requisite artistic and physical aptitude, focus and persistence, can develop their talent to a professional standard in specialist higher professional education arts programmes, in combination with a regular school education. One example of such a top-level education is the Dutch National Ballet Academy (NBA), which is part of the Amsterdam School of the Arts' Theatre Department. In cooperation with the Olympiaschool (primary education), the Gerrit van der Veen College (senior general secondary education/pre-university education) and The National Ballet.

Following selection, the young talents follow a programme from group seven in which daily ballet lessons are combined with regular education. The NBA ballet lessons are given in studios in the primary school. The ballet teachers and the regular teachers work together to ensure that the pupils receive good support. The coordination between both school systems continues during secondary education. On the basis of an order in council (the 'DaMu' order), the pupils receive the most efficient possible timetable with certain exemptions and dance (or music) as an examination subject. During productions with The National Ballet, the timetable is adjusted to fit the timetable of rehearsals and performances. These are also sometimes at weekends or during the school holidays. Young dance talents need great self-discipline (lifestyle, time management, homework planning, social contacts), and if they live outside of Amsterdam they have to spend many days away from home.

The ballet programme is set up along professional, international standards. Dance teachers (who are largely former top-level dancers) speak plainly when it comes to making assessments: not good enough is really not good enough, and good can always be better. Just like professional athletes, dancers have to accept that their performances can always be improved. At the end of each year, they are told whether they have improved sufficiently to continue with the programme. In order to enter the higher professional education phase, they must at least complete the senior general secondary education level. For this reason too, cooperation between the academy and the partners in education is so important.

During the higher professional education phase, the involvement of The National Ballet becomes ever greater. The last year is then an intensive work experience year, in which pupils can take part in the tableau of the Junior Company, which has its own programming, including performances in the Netherlands and abroad.

This coordination between education types and study phases throughout the process means pupils can get the most out of their education. Without this cooperation, a ballet programme at this level would not be possible.

Work with employers to offer challenging learning environments

Make it possible for students to learn in realistic contexts. To this end, involve the professional field intensively in excellence programmes and ensure that students can observe, take part and contribute in the working environment to solutions for issues that have an impact on employers and top sectors.

The challenge for excellent students, along with the associated learning experience, is often found in professional practice or in scientific or academic research. High-quality learning environments are almost always located in the professional field or in research and this requires a high level of joint involvement and responsibility of this professional field and the knowledge institutions in order to organise these learning environments.

First of all, it is necessary that relationships with the professional field are strengthened in relation to excellence programmes and excellent students. Excellence is still a relatively unknown phenomenon in the professional field in the Netherlands, and it is up to the educational institutions to take a lead and make inroads in this respect. In this light, the many prizes for innovative designs that can be won by students at universities (of applied sciences) would appear to be a good means of spotlighting excellent students.

In addition, it is necessary that researchers at the universities are open towards honours students, admit them to their research and inspire them with their own drive for research.

Call

Employers, we call on you to cooperate with the educational institutions and help design the stimulating learning environments that challenge excellent students to exceed themselves. Your interest and support are essential in order to create a sustainable, ambitious culture of study.

For sustainable support and cooperation, it is of great importance that the profile of the excellence programmes is raised in the professional field, the client for excellent students. This is also a call to educational institutes: put your name out there! A call to students: act as ambassadors! And a call to the government: continue to support excellence education! Finally, to employers: make use of the new intakes of excellent students and support the further development of these talented people. This would allow the professional field to show where excellence can lead and what an important role students can play by taking part in these programmes.

From the table discussions:

“Learning means together – working on solutions to complex issues.”

From the table discussions:

“The commercial sector needs people who are proud of being good at something. Education should help them in this. Let them feel excellent and above all not switch off their passion.”

Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences

Honours students from technical programmes at the HvA are closely involved in the practically oriented research carried out in the research groups. This ensures that the research agendas of the professorships are translated into education. From the professors, constant coordination takes place with the professional field. Trade and industry participate in the research and are active within the honour programme, including by providing guest speakers.

Thanks to the intensive cooperation, students are involved in, for example, research into increasing airport safety, improving maintenance processes and testing new ways of detecting defects in the composite structures of aircraft. The HvA is cooperating with companies and institutions such as KLM, Fokker, the National Aerospace Laboratory and the Royal Netherlands Air Force.

The honours education is organised into 'studios'. In this studio setting, research takes place for a period of one year, supported by coaching and the formation of theory. The studio is a physical space where the students can spend 40 hours a week working and where the various different parties can meet and exchange knowledge. The interaction between education, research and trade and industry is organised in such a way that the parties can profit from one another's expertise in a very natural way.

Part of the honours programme is graduation in a subject of relevance to trade and industry (part of the research agenda). The final results are presented to the specific parties concerned, for example in the form of a seminar. Last year, the Aviation Management honours programme organised a seminar to which they welcomed 300 participants from the professional field. These participants listened to the results, but also gave critical feedback.

Students' research is presented at international conferences and even finds its way into academic journals.

Alumni are educational capital

Ensure that graduates of excellence programmes continue to feel affiliated to their programme. Based on their experiences, they will be able to relate what the added value of excellence has meant to their development as a professional and act as role models for new students. Honours alumni are the ambassadors of excellence.

Building a relationship on the basis of excellence programmes with private and public partners takes time and a great deal of effort. The professional field will at first not be convinced of the need and necessity of such programmes and the value of the excellence certificate will still be growing.

For a number of reasons, it is therefore of great importance to retain the relationship with graduates. Alumni represent the university or university of applied sciences where they studied, and excellent students in particular fulfil an ambassadorial function.

Alumni are also of great importance in building up a network; they also offer programmes the opportunity to be associated with companies and institutions with which it may otherwise have been difficult to enter into agreement. So cherish your graduates.

For the alumni themselves, a good relationship after graduation also brings benefits. Graduates can stay up to date with innovations in education and they have a platform from which to make a contribution towards education – as a guest speaker, a partner in educational development and, for example, as a client in excellence programmes.

Call

Lecturers, invest in your students and maintain your relationship with them, also after they have graduated. Students, be aware of your added value to the institution from which you have graduated. Continue to show interest in developments within the programme and be open to allowing (excellent) students in the future to profit from your expertise and network, and where possible offer them the chance to come and learn in your working environment.

From the table discussions:

“Students must be able to look beyond the boundaries of their own specialist fields. I consider this an essential precondition for excellence. To want to be able to think in an interdisciplinary way.”

From the table discussions:

“Learning will take place in a new context and according to new methods; the school – work sequence will lose its self-evident nature (first school, then work).”

From the table discussions:

“For the professional field, developing real specialist knowledge means that excellence programmes should be more in-depth, perhaps with not so much of an interdisciplinary nature as what is currently offered within most excellence programmes. (This may be more true of the real exact science professions).”

Leiden University

The Leiden Leadership Programme, the Master's honours programme offered by the university, is seeing its alumni helping the programme along in various different ways. They are brought in for their experience, which proves extremely useful in the recruitment and selection of new students. The underlying idea is that graduates can use their own development process to explain in detail what the programme involves and does to the student, as well as being able to estimate whether the programme suits the student or not – and vice versa.

In addition, the performance of the practical assignment the students carry out as a group during the programme has a positive effect on the profile of the Leiden Leadership Programme. In recent years, for example, a number of practical assignments have led to follow-up assignments with the partner organisations concerned, which reinforces the positive impression of the programme and the cooperation with Leiden University among these organisations. Furthermore, there are organisations which have become interested in entering into a cooperation with the University following contact with students of the programme. As well as involving the graduates in its selection and recruitment, Leiden University wishes in the coming months to explore further in what other ways the graduates could play a role.

4. Networks

The universities (of applied science) are sailing towards a new dot on the horizon, setting course from the high-water mark where they now are. This manifesto sets out the signposts they should follow.

Networking plays a considerable role in this: informing and stimulating one another, and working together. All of the partners in the chain are invited to join in. This chain also explicitly includes the professional field and the knowledge companies. The excellence partners will continue to meet, also after the Sirius Programme is discontinued, and the Sirius Network that has grown up will continue to facilitate these meetings.

During the year ahead, the National Platform Science & Technology will make every effort to strengthen the ties between the educational sectors. On the basis of the knowledge obtained within the Sirius Programme, the Platform will seek to stimulate talent networks for primary and secondary education in eight regions, whereby it will strive to connect to existing structures such as regional science & technology networks, pre-university colleges and secondary education/higher education networks. Part of this task will involve drawing up inventories of the players, the supply and the requirements of schools, in addition to the stimulation of knowledge development and knowledge sharing. To this end, the National Platform Science & Technology will make it clear which models are being used, what reward structures are in place (for example for a smooth transition from a secondary education honours programme to an excellence programme within higher education), and where co-creation between the sectors can be stimulated.

We invite everyone to take these steps with us and to continue to work on the creation of an ambitious study culture.

MEMBERS TABLE 0, EXCELLENCE SUMMIT 2014

Prof. Dr. H.P.M. Adriaansens	Former Dean and founder of University College Roosevelt in Middelburg
Mr K. Van Bemmelen	Student TU Delft, alumnus Amsterdam University College
Mr T. van Bokhoven	Co-founder of Green Claim and alumnus Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
Mr J. van den Boogaard	Student Tilburg University, alumnus Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
Mr J. Booij	Recruitment Specialist Brunel
Mr <i>drs.</i> J.J.C.M. Corstjens	Director, National Platform Science & Technology
Ms <i>drs.</i> R. Heemskerk	Senior project leader Sirius Programme
Prof. <i>mr.</i> H.M.de Jong	Rector of Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences
Ms <i>drs.</i> M. van Haaren	Coordinator Honours College Leiden University
Ms <i>mr.</i> M. ten Hoonte	Employment Market Director, Randstad
Prof. Dr. J.W.M. Kessels	Professor of Human Resource Development University of Twente, Professor of Educational Leadership at the Open University Co-founder Kessels & Smit, The Learning Company
Ms <i>drs.</i> Y. Sark	Director, Youngworks
Ms <i>ir.</i> E. Schaper MBA	Interim manager of educational organisations
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In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science was involved in the organisation of the summit, the undertaking and the discussion of the manifesto, in the person of *dr.* B.S. Oen.

Manifesto

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This *Manifesto for Future Excellence Education* has come about in cooperation with the stakeholder community as described in Section 2. The explicit intention is for the content of this manifesto to be copied, used and developed further. This publication can be downloaded from www.hva.nl/summit.



Hogeschool van Amsterdam



sirius programma

excellentie in het hoger onderwijs