

## **World citizens in a learning society**

**The Hague University of Applied Sciences en route to 2020**

vision document

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## Introduction

How will The Hague University of Applied Sciences develop over the next few years? Where do we want to be in 2020? In this document, we describe and explain the strategic choices we are making for the future. Why? Because it is important to know where we're headed together. Equally, this document is a source of inspiration for our daily actions and will help us make decisions on what we plan to do and to avoid. Once we have a clear picture of the kind of university of applied sciences we wish to become, we can better determine what to do next.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences has achieved a great deal in recent years. The previous institution plan (HOP7) has been implemented and, more recently, we have sharpened our profile, partly in response to the profile and performance agreements. We now have a profile that befits a metropolitan, diverse and international university of applied sciences in the Haaglanden region. That profile permeates our education and our research in various ways, such as the joint educational framework and the THUAS-wide themes of "Entrepreneurship and innovation in an era of globalisation", "Quality of life: technology for health" and "Good governance for a safe world".

In recent years, The Hague University of Applied Sciences has evolved as a broadly-based knowledge institution which, through its education and research, contributes greatly to the development of the knowledge economy and finding solutions to social problems. If it is to continue responding and contributing to the dynamics of the world of work, THUAS must engage in a constant process of renewal – particularly now that the world around us is changing faster than ever. Globalisation, the emergence of ICT as a GPT and the development of the learning economy are impacting every aspect of social life. The transition is so far-reaching and proceeding at such a fast pace that the longer-term implications are nigh on impossible to predict. Developments are moving fast; knowledge and insights quickly become outdated. As a university of applied sciences, how can we respond effectively to these developments?

In this document, we describe our vision and ambitions and the main challenges we face. In writing this document, we drew inspiration from various sources, including the many discussions we have held within and outside THUAS. However, this vision document is merely the start of a joint process. It relates to the first part of the 2014-2020 Institution Plan. The second part will look at how we will put our vision and ambitions into practice. We are absolutely committed to doing this as a collective. We are a unified university of applied sciences and we have a shared mission.

The Executive Board and directors

## 1. The Hague University of Applied Sciences in society

Every university of applied sciences is expected to play its part in the development of society, particularly the professional world, through education and research and by making knowledge available. But how should we take on this role as The Hague University of Applied Sciences, in light of our position and our profile? And how should we respond to the dominant developments in society?

### A broad remit

We consider it the primary task of our university of applied sciences to provide higher professional education. Our bachelor's degree programmes make up the lion's share of that education. We offer master's degree programmes where there is a clear social need. Our aim is more than just preparing students for their first job. We give our students lifelong tools, not only for their working lives, but also for their participation in society as citizens. Both of these involve a process of broadly-based personal development for students, which is more than a matter of simply acquiring professional knowledge and skills.

We view THUAS as a knowledge institution where research occupies an essential second place. In our view, that research must always serve educational and practical innovation.

Through education and research, we contribute to society's progress in economic and social terms. To achieve this, we maintain close relationships with the realms of secondary education, our field of activity and relevant social players in the Haaglanden region. The region is typified by a broad spectrum of professional fields, which explains the wide range of degree programmes on offer at THUAS.

THUAS is very much an international university of applied sciences, reflecting the highly international nature of our region and of The Hague in particular. The Hague is home to networks of non-governmental organisations, headquarters of diplomatic services, head offices of multinational companies and UN and EU organisations. It is a city where regional, national and international economic flows of services and goods converge. Because of this, The Hague plays a major role in global social, political and cultural networks. The region provides a fascinating environment with an abundance of cultures, old traditions and new customs, where multilingualism is part and parcel of daily life. It is a distinctly international environment. Our diverse and international student population clearly mirrors this.

## Developments in society

THUAS considers the growing internationalisation of society and professional practice as a dominant and relevant development. In any sphere of professional practice, we would not be able to function optimally without knowledge of developments elsewhere in the world. An international perspective is also necessary in terms of attitude and skills. The connection between The Hague region and the rest of the world is essential, and THUAS plays a prominent role in this.

In addition, we consider the development of the knowledge society in a learning economy to be another dominant development. The momentum of economic and social developments is steadily quickening. Knowledge is available at all times and across the world, and new information and insights are developing at an ever-faster pace. Networks, supported by digital technologies, can operate exceptionally fast and influence functions and processes in both society and professional practice. Long-term predictability is becoming more and more elusive. In the knowledge society of the 21st century, professions and professional practice for graduates are also in a constant state of flux. Tomorrow's professional will have to work longer than his parents and his career will be far more varied. Changing career and job will increasingly be the norm rather than the exception. Organisations, systems and people will have to adapt more and more to changing circumstances, and knowledge circulation will assume greater importance as a result. Through its education and research, THUAS forms an essential link in the knowledge chain.

Thus a complex, hybrid and diverse society is emerging in which boundaries are becoming blurred (not just the borders between countries, but also the boundaries between physical and virtual worlds) and certainty and predictability are diminishing. Citizens are less and less attached to traditional norms, values and customs and are influenced by other cultures and religions. Another factor is a decentralising government, which advocates a participative society in which citizens, customers, clients, patients will have to play a more active role. This too creates a sense of uncertainty.

The aforementioned developments in society impact on the role of every professional; nurses, mechanical engineers, primary school teachers, business economists etc. It is up to THUAS to prepare lecturers and students and, by extension, graduates for these developments.

## Developments in higher education

Higher education has also taken on a highly international character. A few decades ago, nobody could have guessed the speed with which elements of foreign higher education systems, driven by technological innovations, are being embraced by our own learning environment. This calls for qualities such as flexibility and adaptability, which don't always come naturally to a large university of applied sciences.

The government's goal is to make the Netherlands more innovative, entrepreneurial and competitive. It is seeking to create a higher education system of international stature, which plays a part in solving the major social issues and increasing economic prosperity. Although the quality of the Dutch higher

education system is fundamentally good, we need a huge quality drive to make the system future-proof. This will involve improving the quality of higher education right across the board.

The doubts that arose a few years ago in society about the quality of higher professional education and the value of diplomas from universities of applied sciences had a major impact on the internal organisation of those universities of applied sciences. Roles, responsibilities and competencies were subjected to scrutiny. Investments were made in training and professionalising the Examination Boards, to ensure that they are properly equipped for the important role assigned to them in laws and regulations. The overhaul of the accreditation system in 2011 tightened up the accreditation process.

The quality and level of education have come under even more pressure in recent years, especially at the universities of applied sciences in the Randstad region. The considerable increase in student intake and growing pluralism of that intake are clearly two major factors in this. Higher education establishments have yet to respond appropriately to this.

Increased bureaucracy due to stricter monitoring and the tendency towards quantified standards have certainly not helped them to improve. We want to be able to focus more on what really matters. A high-quality institution for higher education is an asset to society and the economy in The Hague region.

## **2. The strategic decisions made by The Hague University of Applied Sciences**

The above developments present a number of significant challenges to THUAS. We want to take on those challenges by focusing our strategy over the next few years on:

- Further improving our quality by various means, including:
- further developing our international profile,
- promoting global citizenship, and
- establishing networks.

These four strongly interconnected strategic focal areas serve as guidelines for the development of education and research and the organisation of The Hague University of Applied Sciences.

We explain each of these focal areas below.

## Further improving quality

The educational framework we adopted in 2012 placed the emphasis on a high-quality and challenging learning environment. An environment with a wide variety of form and content, an internationally-oriented curriculum and the latest technologies. An environment that demands and stimulates an inquiring and entrepreneurial attitude among students. This learning environment is created by inspiring and innovative lecturers who bring out the best in themselves and their students. We are making great headway with the implementation of the educational framework, but there is certainly still a long way to go.

### **Even more students to a high level**

The Hague University of Applied Sciences is in favour of wide accessibility as a matter of principle. We give opportunities to every student who has the capability to study at a university of applied science and who is genuinely committed to making use of those opportunities. Being well aware that wide accessibility may be at odds with our requirements and quality standards, we create a teaching and educational climate in which both components can be successfully combined. Our aim is to ensure that every potential, capable and motivated higher professional education student, regardless of his background, has done everything he can and been given the means to achieve his full potential. Above all, we want that student to leave our university of applied sciences well-qualified and with advanced skills.

We are very successful in this aim, but we want more students to attain that ultimate goal. Therefore, we want to delve even more deeply into the talents, motivation and learning styles of all our students. Needless to say, the students themselves are primarily responsible for their own success, but as a university of applied sciences we want to do our utmost to offer high-quality education in such a way that it challenges even more students and offers what those students need. We will use our leadership and our professionalism to explore with the students the best means of achieving this. We intend to examine the education we provide and make the necessary changes to our educational organisation and quality culture. The Hague University of Applied Sciences aims to make quality an even stronger hallmark of the institution.

### **Professionalisation**

The interaction between the lecturing team and the student is of paramount importance to quality and academic success. THUAS expects its lecturers to show an interest in the diversity of the student population and their academic progress, stimulate independent thought among students, provide appropriate and timely feedback, be willing to try out new ways of teaching and to work with colleagues in developing and implementing the curriculum and the quality of education. The lecturing team's educational remit extends beyond lecturing to include developing, evaluating and updating the education and the related research. Professional development opportunities are an essential feature of the role that THUAS assigns to lecturers. The function of The Hague Centre for Teaching & Learning is to professionalise lecturers and develop educational leadership. The centre is dedicated to promoting lecturers' subject matter and teaching expertise and the services it offers are the product of discussions with the users. In higher education, Teaching & Learning is a joint process involving lecturers and students.

## **ICT in Education**

The use of digital technologies in education presents another pedagogical challenge. The use of digital technologies is not only changing how we work but also reinvigorating the learning environment. We can make education more attractive and effective by embracing new media and offering flexible learning. This creates greater scope for a bespoke learning process, which promotes better and more effective learning.

THUAS wants to encourage the use of ICT in education in the form of incubators, which provide lecturers with the opportunity to experiment with the digitalisation of education. Lecturers and students at the university of applied sciences thereby become the engines of innovation. On the back of researching the quality of and the changes wrought in education as a result of ICT, lecturers and students can draw on the experiences gained in the incubator. In this way, we are building our own knowledge base and expertise in the development of digital education.

The incorporation of ICT paves the way for some interesting and challenging teaching methods and acts as stimulus to amassing the required expertise. The use of new technologies inevitably raises issues of reliability and security, to which we must give due consideration. This is particularly relevant when it comes to testing and certifying our students' education. We will therefore forge ties with other partners in the higher education sector who have been working intensively on the accessibility and reliability of new technologies for education and research for a number of years.

## **Internationalisation**

We believe the quality improvement we are seeking can only be offered by continually responding to developments in the world. We want to equip all students with knowledge and international skills that are relevant and widely applicable, not only for their degree programme, but also for their chosen profession. We consider attracting international students not as a quantitative goal in itself, but important for the internationalisation of education in a qualitative sense.

We will be consolidating the international aspect of our education and research, guided by our three themes (see the Introduction) and in cooperation with our international partners. We will focus our strategic international cooperation on a select few higher education establishments elsewhere in the world. This means looking for other institutions that have built a strong profile in a metropolitan setting and that focus on quality. With them, we will create an active network in which agreements are made on the joint development of education and research, as well as the exchange of lecturers and students.

We have made great strides forward in the internationalisation of our education in recent years. As well as developing international programmes, THUAS has decided to make internationalisation a permanent and compulsory component of the curriculum. Our international bachelor's and master's degree programmes are performing well. Having achieved many of the objectives of the current internationalisation policy, over the coming period we can set new emphases, develop bespoke solutions for various degree programmes and deepen the quality of this policy. Over the next few



years, we will seek to obtain the Accreditation Organisation of the Netherlands and Flanders quality label for more of our degree programmes. First and foremost, however, we aim to become the most international university of applied sciences in the Netherlands by 2020.

## **Global citizenship**

In the previous section we described the dominant developments in society. The globalising knowledge society is blurring boundaries in many respects and engendering uncertainty and unpredictability. This impacts on every professional field, albeit to varying degrees and in differing ways. A community worker will feel the effects in very different ways to a facility manager. As previously mentioned, we want to not only qualify our students for a profession, but also give them the tools they need to lead their lives as committed, conscious, critical and inquiring individuals. We are absolutely unequivocal on this. If we want to equip our students for future challenges, their personal and moral development and lifelong learning are tremendously important. This calls for us to work with students to develop their curiosity and problem-solving ability and help them make sound and well-informed choices.

We take our point of departure from the concept of global citizenship. In essence, we consider global citizenship to mean critical awareness that extends beyond the boundaries of the local or national community. Involvement in global issues is merely one aspect; equally important is participation in the pluralistic society in the Netherlands. This involvement in society is a product of personal development that helps foster good citizenship. The vision on global citizenship will be developed further and, even more importantly, will provide direction for our education and research and related actions. To succeed in bringing about this development, we must take a joint approach involving internal and external parties. We have an inspiring programme for this which extends over the next year.

## **Networking university of applied sciences**

Research in higher professional education is a powerful tool for enhancing the quality of education. It strengthens the research skills of lecturers and students and helps generate innovative insights and translate urgent practical constraints into education. The research activities undertaken by The Hague University of Applied Sciences have flourished in recent years at the Centre for Research and Development. Nonetheless, research results have only been incorporated into bachelor's degree education to a limited extent and, as is the case with the alignment of the triumvirate of education, research and professional practice, there remains a lot of scope for improvement.

As indicated in the introduction, The Hague University of Applied Sciences has chosen three THUAS-wide themes on which THUAS will focus its development efforts over the coming years. These are:

1. Entrepreneurship and innovation in an age of globalisation.
2. Quality of life: technology for health.
3. Good governance for a safe world.

These focal points form a bridge between the outside world and THUAS. They will be developed as clusters of education and research programmes, through which THUAS will strengthen its position as a partner for other knowledge institutions, government authorities and the business community in the region. We are convinced that *knowledge circulation* is the best way to bring about innovation in education and in professional practice. By this, we mean a relatively new form of knowledge circulation which assigns a prominent role to THUAS. Developing The Hague University of Applied Sciences as a *networking* university of applied sciences will be one of the keys to this. Our goal is to create an open link between education, research and professional practice. To achieve this, we need to adopt an open and active attitude towards society, aimed at contributing to resolving the economic and social issues of the region. This first and foremost involves reciprocity. We want to be considered a reliable partner for education, research and innovation in professional practice. This, in turn, will consolidate THUAS' positioning as a knowledge institution.

Lectors have a pivotal role to play in this new kind of knowledge circulation and the policy on research and lectors will be revised to reflect this. However, lecturers and students will also be involved in this form of knowledge circulation. Our education will need to incorporate a certain amount of flexibility to accommodate this. Together, we are seeking ways of introducing the necessary flexibility within the constraints imposed by laws and regulations. In the process, we will have to strike an effective balance between stability and flexibility (resilient and responsive).

### 3. Organisational development

Our strategic choices enable us to give shape and meaning to the development of students in their interaction with the future world of their profession and with society. The Hague University of Applied Sciences is developing a consistent and coherent policy based on the agreements made with the government, which were established in interaction with other universities of applied sciences and the professional sphere. THUAS is continually improving its education and research and its profile in the three themes will become even more keenly defined over the coming years.

We want to provide a living example to our students of what we wish to impart to them. We want to promote global citizenship and truly fulfil our social role. To do this, we must be a value-driven organisation and fundamentally overhaul our organisation. This must be expressed partly in how we steer development, quality and performance. That is why we are taking on the challenge of connecting the world of institutionalised management instruments to the world of social interaction and the need for individual attention and opportunity.

This calls for leadership on the part of our professionals, managers, administrators and supervisors – driven by an obligation to our students, each other and society at large. We want to 'manage' based on what really matters. We have chosen a limited number of 'strict' criteria that should deliver positive results. We want to increase the satisfaction level of both employees and students, and improve the results of degree programme accreditations. Consequently, we will increasingly choose 'effective dialogue' over developing an ever-expanding list of indicators. At the end of the day, what matters is that we deliver the intended high quality, both in our education and our research – and that the

organisation facilitates such quality. The opinions of students, employees and external assessors (including the world of work) are to be taken very seriously.

An organisational development programme is now underway, which entails the development of leadership, professionalisation and a new structure for THUAS. We will have to devote a great deal of time and energy to this over the next few years. As part of this process, The Hague University of Applied Sciences will also open up a greater number of career paths in education, research, management and support. To provide the ideal conditions for the intake, training and reorientation of its professionals, in the new planning period THUAS will be adapting its HRM tools in order to provide a fresh stimulus for employees' career paths. We must also improve the way in which our Central Services support and facilitate education and research. The proposed reorganisation must contribute significantly to this.

The Hague University of Applied Sciences' ambitions also have implications for the physical aspects of the learning environment. We have adopted a housing master plan, which takes as its point of departure the specific requirements of multidisciplinary cooperation in a stimulating learning environment: Meeting spaces and spaces that offer the flexibility for different ways of working. Cooperation, creativity and innovation are keywords. Our accommodation must also reflect our close ties with professional practice. International students and our international outlook are a particular focal point. The presence of international students requires us to develop campus facilities for studying, living and leisure. There are all kinds of initiatives underway in the immediate vicinity of our The Hague campus to transform this neighbourhood into a global meeting place for young talent.

At the start of the 2014-2020 planning period, The Hague University of Applied Sciences is in good financial shape. To realise our ambitions, we will be investing in education and research and the quality of both. In 2014 we are starting to explore the opportunities for structural improvements to efficiency and effectiveness, to help overcome the mismatch between objectives and means. As part of this process, we are looking at the savings that can be made from the reorganisation, the investments in ICT for education, improvements to internal services and reducing the control burden, the innovative accommodation approach and a more effective HRM policy. Once any operating deficits have been covered, the resulting revenues will be invested exclusively in the quality of our education and research.

## 4. Where do we go from here?

This document sets out our vision and ambitions. We have taken as our point of departure the profile of The Hague University of Applied Sciences as a metropolitan, diverse and international university of applied sciences. Based on what we have identified as the dominant developments in society, we have adopted four strategic focal points that are closely interconnected. We are striving to further improve our quality, drawing heavily on internationalisation, global citizenship and establishing networks. We also wanted to drive home our desire to be a value-driven organisation and the fact that this calls for a different kind of management and culture.

This is Part I of our Institution Plan for the period 2014-2020. It is an important first step, but without the steps that follow it, this vision document is somewhat immaterial. We will be translating our vision and ambitions into concrete changes and improvements. And we will be doing this together, in the collective interest. Another document will be published on this subject later this year; Part II of the Institution Plan.

To be continued...