

OUR AGENDA

EDUCATION IN ROTTERDAM FOR THE WORLD OF TOMORROW



STRATEGIC AGENDA



UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES

PREFACE

How can we educate every student to become the professional for the world of tomorrow? Keeping 2025 in mind, this question demands a clear strategy. In this Strategic Agenda we describe our ambitions and common challenges to shape the best possible future-proof higher professional education.

We live in a time of infinite possibility, in which innovation occurs continually and at a fast tempo. It has a great impact on our society, our social life and our work. We are educating students for the work place without being able to predict the state of employment in the future. The professional practice is developing faster than our education in its current form. At the same time there are many possibilities for innovation that we can contribute to from an educational perspective. Our education needs to respond to our fast and continually changing world. It is our responsibility to prepare students for the challenging and sometimes uncertain future.

Our students are diverse in their cultural and social-economic backgrounds and we see differences as far as what students want and are able to do. In the past years an increasing number of students have found their way to higher education. Higher education seems more accessible. However too many of our students leave the school without their diploma. We are not successfully challenging and guiding every student to complete their educational programme with a diploma. We acknowledge that our educational system is unintentionally contributing to inequality in our society. That can and must change. We have the social task of offering education to every student to fit their talents and motivations, and that will teach them to cope with what will be demanded of them. Especially in Rotterdam. Now and in the future. If we do not succeed, then realising our mission will be difficult.

We have discussed the question of how we can educate each student for the world of tomorrow with the students themselves, the lecturers, applied research professors, and supporting staff. We have also discussed it with colleagues from other schools and with people from the professional practice in Rotterdam. The results of that process, together with internal and external analysis, form the basis of the strategic agenda: Our Agenda. We have come to a joint conclusion that developments in our society ask for an improvement of our current education. It reflects a widely acknowledged sense and is therefore a task for our school in the coming years.

We have to think of solutions to this task using the dynamics of the professional practice and acknowledging the diversity of our students. The reciprocity of education, research and professional practice is part of the solution, pedagogics and didactics is the other part. We are not steering from a central point. The key is lecturer teams, and all else facilitates. We realise that there is no blueprint. It is helpful when every employee takes on his or her responsibility and that we will experience the process together.

Ron Bormans
Angelien Sanderman
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Rotterdam, August 2016

WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

It is our task to educate every student to become a professional who can substantially contribute to society. We do this in Rotterdam in a metropolitan and international context.

Education, research and practice are inextricably linked and this cohesion generates high-quality education.

In all that we do our premise is equality, promoting and pursuing mutual respect and emancipation.

(adapted from '*Statuten en Reglementen*' 2002, last edition 2014, Hogeschool Rotterdam)

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?

Every student at this school may expect a safe environment for his or her development. Each programme is a community in which students are seen and acknowledged.

The student is educated, receives a diploma and the professional identity is shaped.

We organise our education small-scale, meaning that when possible we work in small groups, mutual commitment is great, communication lines are short, and there is personal guidance and attention. Students, lecturers and those involved all know each other and are connected.

In our education we acknowledge the presence of differences. Our pedagogical and didactic approach is based on inclusiveness. Diversity is a given and we try to apply it as a strength. Excluding and stereotyping are discouraged; all students feel at home and we have high expectations for everyone. We offer all students equal opportunities and challenge them to perform at their highest level. We do so by tuning into their varying backgrounds, personal situations, ambitions, motives and talents. We guide students in their choices. End qualifications are fixed, but the road leading to that can vary in form, content, and tempo. Some students will accelerate and others will slow down. Each student will grow toward a higher level and will develop to become a skilled, reflective and enterprising professional.

In order to give our students a solid foundation for the job market of the future, it is essential that education, research, and practice are meshed. Each study programme is entwined with the field of research and practice, national or international. That is what we call context-rich education.

In this context students, lecturers, and field professionals collaborate in a work-study environment. They shape education. The lecturer teams take the lead in education and are responsible for the quality of it. The professional practice is participating fully in education via casuistry (case history), internships, applied research, field labs, living labs etc. In this way we anticipate developments in the professional field and students learn the dynamics of that field directly. All concerned work and learn with and from each other and are continually focussed on further developing the work-study environment.

Education cannot do without research. Our research is an important impulse for the continual improvement of the level and quality of our educational programmes. Our applied research professors, lecturers, and students all evaluate the developments in the professional field and help fuel innovations in professional conduct, in processes, products and services. They bring knowledge to the table about new development in the professional field. This allows study programmes to better integrate research methodology, reflection, and critical thinking, thus strengthening the programme.

Education will only be successful when students work hard. In addition to creating knowledge and skills, students are asked to reflect and be critical of norms and values of the profession and environment. In this environment they will get to know themselves, increasingly become more independent and take on responsibilities. We give the students tools to be enterprising and confidently find their way in the professional world and thrive there.

Our way of working is directed by a learning culture, active participation, and responsibility of all parties involved. At the forefront is to get and have professional autonomy. The lecturer teams work effectively with internal and external parties. All other staff members in the organisation from caretaker to Chairman of the Board, advisor to accountant, administrative assistant to manager, and from ICT professional to director, facilitate education. The idea is to be service minded, supportive, and pro-actively remove barriers making way for experiment and development.

In this way we learn from each other and do we work toward high-quality education. In our educational vision we formulate the characteristics of this type of education¹.

WHAT DO WE NEED TO DO?

It is a tall order to offer our students a work-study environment with various actors and learning routes and also be a small-scale and safe learning environment in which they are seen and acknowledged. Every student is given high-quality education, is awarded a diploma, and is ready for the next step in his or her professional career.

In order to realise that, it is our priority for the next years to transform our education considering the following: the manner in which we educate the students, the manner of leadership, the way in which we facilitate, and in which we are organised. This will impact all parts of the organisation and all staff. We have the following tasks in common:

1 Vision on Education, Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, August 2016.

TASK 1 EDUCATION

The first task and the key to our success is in the hands of our lecturer teams. They interact with students, researchers, and the professional practice, working toward the best possible higher professional education.

We ask all lecturer teams the following question:

What does the content of the Strategic Agenda mean to your study programme?

For the coming period we ask all teams to discuss the topic of the higher education that we all have in mind. We ask that you search for the answers that best fit your study programme in the context of your work.

TASK 2 ORGANISATION

If lecturers make the difference, then the organisation must ensure that they can make that difference. Each manager and supporting staff member is of service to the task that stands before the lecturer teams. It is up to them to create an environment in which the teams can excel. In the near future we will work on the following points:

- Professional autonomy
- Professional development
- Appropriate culture of responsibility
- Support that is instrumental in a continually changing education
- Leadership that equips inclusiveness and adaptability
- ICT related to an organisation and education that is developing

TASK 3 PROFILE AND IDENTITY

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences consists of more than one hundred programmes, each with an individual identity. We have set ourselves the task to determine what the binding elements are. In the next period we will also define what makes us the school of higher education for Rotterdam.

Based on conversations with co-workers and external partners we have found two explicit areas of focus. We will work further in the concept of 'internationalisation'. And we will focus on new economic activity in Rotterdam, partly in relation to 'Haven' and 'Zuid'.

WHAT IS OUR NEXT STEP?

We feel the urgency, but want to take our time. We will get to work with one another.

These tasks will be further explored in an agenda of realisation. Together with the Strategic Agenda and our Vision on Education, these tasks form the Strategic, long-term Policy Plan of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences.

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