

Teaching framework

1 Introduction

Teaching is one of the university's three key tasks, making a significant contribution to society. It is with this objective in mind that Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam) wishes to teach people to become engaged academics who are eager to explore and push the boundaries of their knowledge and beliefs.

Lecturers play an indispensable role in good-quality teaching, with the quality of teaching at VU Amsterdam being largely determined by the quality of its lecturers. Their ability to inspire students, their teaching skills, and their ability to situate their own subject within the larger context of the programme and society – and the ability to connect this with research – forms the basis of teaching at VU Amsterdam. Ensuring these qualities according to the lecturer's position as a member of the academic staff is central to the staff policy that applies to lecturers within VU Amsterdam.

The vision for education, which revolves around the core values 'open', 'responsible' and 'personal', acts as a benchmark for teaching within VU Amsterdam. 'Open' means open to diversity in disciplines, nationalities, religious beliefs, world views and convictions. Openness also includes providing the freedom for dialogue – both between lecturers as well as between lecturers and students – that is focused on academic insights and continuous academic development. 'Responsible' means committed to students, the programme, society and the environment. This implies that teaching is both internally and externally focused, involving collaboration with students and stakeholders outside academic education (in other words: in the professional field). Responsibility is expressed by lecturers and students mutually giving and receiving constructive feedback and lecturers being open to ongoing professionalisation, both individually and as part of a team. 'Personal' means that the academic community is one in which each member is recognised. Personal teaching entails teaching in which students and lecturers alike are free to voice their own opinions without risking adverse effects on their professionalism, and with students and lecturers treating each other respectfully. In light of this, lecturers and students are members of an academic community in which the core values of 'open', 'personal', and 'responsible' ensure high-quality teaching performance.

VU Amsterdam is committed to recognising and rewarding a wide range of academic qualities, with equal rewards in all academic domains: teaching, research, impact/valorisation and patient care (for UMC and ACTA). Collaboration, personal and academic leadership (including the embedding of open science principles) and management are key components here. The teaching framework provides a revised guide to developments (particularly professional developments) in the field of teaching and gives further substance and visibility to the career perspective in the educational domain, within both the academic career paths (assistant professor to full professor) and the lecturer career paths (lecturer 4 to lecturer 1).

This teaching framework has three objectives:

1. To improve the acknowledgement and visibility of teaching in the career of academic staff;
2. To support the professional development of academic staff with regards to teaching by describing this development in the different phases of their career;
3. To improve the career prospects for academic staff who dedicate their career to ensuring that teaching is of good quality, that there are innovations in teaching, and that solutions are found to deficiencies within teaching, right up to the highest level in the organisation.

The framework reflects VU Amsterdam's vision for education and Recognition & Rewards philosophy. The framework also aligns with national requirements, such as the UTQ competences. The framework centres on the following competences:

- Collaborating and contributing to the team
- Leadership
- Social practice
- Power to change (enterprising attitude)

2 The aim of the framework

The teaching framework is a tool used to recognise a person's progression and performance with regards to teaching, as well as to monitor these two aspects and make them transparent. This will enable academics and their supervisors to make clear agreements regarding personal development processes. The framework contains quality requirements we set for our lecturers. On a programme and departmental level, the framework can be used to map out the teaching expertise in the body of teaching staff.

A distinction is made between 'career phases' and 'career development'. The former indicates the position of the lecturer in their career, whereas the latter gives an insight into what is required to develop further.

A lecturer's career develops according to three main principles:

1. the increase of their expertise in teaching, their own subject and discipline;
2. their growing contribution to innovation, development and quality assurance in terms of teaching;
3. the increasing responsibilities and complexities in terms of the organisation and impact of education.

The framework describes these according to five core activities, namely:

- A Teaching
- B Designing education
- C Leadership in educational development
- D Organising education and collaboration
- E Quality assurance: reflective & learning capacity

The academic's current level in teaching can be determined according to the nature and scope of these activities. At the same time, it becomes clear which points can be developed further.

In relation to the level achieved in the aforementioned activities A to E, column two specifies the stage at which lecturers find themselves in their careers, which formal roles they may fulfil at this level, and the nature of the career development (including training) at this level.

The framework describes four stages of development:

1. From new lecturer to mid-level lecturer
2. From mid-level lecturer to reflective teaching professional
3. From reflective teaching professional to teaching innovator/specialist
4. From teaching innovator/specialist to educational leader

The activities described and the degree of professionalisation are usually of a cumulative nature, meaning that what is described at a lower level is still applicable to the lecturer's level at that moment in time. However, this does not mean that all activities need to be mentioned; it may concern an activity that the lecturer was working on in the past and that they have now left behind.

3 Core values of VU Amsterdam's teaching teams

Core values in VU Amsterdam's vision for education

- **Personal**
 - An academic community in which each member is recognised. Education at VU Amsterdam is inclusive; we want to be a welcoming place for students and lecturers from different backgrounds.
 - Education at VU Amsterdam is student-centred and encourages self-regulated learning and active teaching methods.
- **Open**
 - Open to diversity in disciplines, nationalities, religious beliefs, world views and convictions. We believe that students' different perspectives add value to our education.
 - Due to changes in the VU Amsterdam environment and society at large, education is constantly subject to change, and the academic professional adapts themselves accordingly.
- **Responsible**
 - Engaging with people, the programme, society and the world. In our teaching, we study social issues from multidisciplinary perspectives and express our social responsibility.
 - We train our students to become critical and engaged academics. We stimulate student autonomy and self-actualising capacities with our teaching. It's about the person you become, not just the job you're trained to do.

What does that require from academic teaching teams?

- **Personal**
 - Is aware of their own values, context and perspectives: self-knowledge is essential for good teaching.
 - Has the ability to assess teaching situations and act accordingly. Dealing with this adequately requires resourcefulness and tact (pedagogical and otherwise). A lecturer at VU Amsterdam does what is best for the student's education.
- **Open**
 - Is curious about the various target groups and the social changes that rapidly succeed one another. Takes this open attitude as a point of departure to ask themselves the question: what does this situation require of me?
 - Is willing to learn.
- **Responsible**
 - Has a clear picture of the mission of education. Ensures the design, implementation and evaluation of teaching and innovative programme of study development.
 - Has an enterprising attitude and power to change, informing their willingness and ability to improve teaching, given the educational change mission facing VU Amsterdam (including in the areas of active blended learning, vision for assessment, lifelong development, flexibilisation and student wellbeing).
 - Engages with students, colleagues, social developments and research in the subject area (the teaching content) and recognises that shaping the teaching process requires exchange and/or collaboration, creating meaningful space for connection. Stimulates student autonomy and self-actualising capacities.
 - Has strong reflective ability.

4 Using the framework in practice

All academic staff with teaching roles can interpret the framework according to their own faculty context. In a team, all academic domains are valued: teaching, research, social impact/valorisation (and care). The teaching framework provides a guide to developments (particularly professional developments) within teams in the field of education. Not every academic professional needs to possess the same competences; it is actually the diversity of competences that enables professionals to add value to a team. Having said that, we do expect every academic to contribute to education.

In the context of Recognition & Rewards, academic career paths were established VU Amsterdam-wide in 2023. In 2024, career paths for lecturers were developed, detailing the development opportunities for lecturers (lecturer 4 to lecturer 1) available within VU Amsterdam. The teaching framework is a guiding tool for the development, evaluation, appraisal and rewarding of teaching-related developments (particularly professional developments) within the academic and lecturer career paths.

The framework supports the ongoing valuation of teaching and encouragement of competent lecturers as individuals and team members. It offers:

- a guide for supervisors and employees who wish to focus on a teaching career: it provides insight into how they can develop further, what development opportunities are available, what steps they can take and how to go about this, etc.
- a guide for supervisors and staff to value teaching, for example in annual interviews, and discuss development opportunities for individual lecturers and teams.
- a guide to improving teaching quality. It sheds light on the talents and development opportunities within a team.

The framework provides input and inspiration for assessing teaching as part of an appraisal portfolio and for annual and development interviews. However, no individual or automatic promotion entitlements can be derived from it.

We consider the framework a 'living document'. We will evaluate its use and adjust it if necessary, for instance by adding case studies from practice and/or dialogue questions that can be used as a basis for discussing teaching.

Phase 1. From novice lecturer to mid-level lecturer

Characteristics

A Teaching

- Applies proven teaching methods and is aware of different perspectives in the group;
- Utilises subject-specific knowledge and knowledge of teaching methodology in connection with educational objectives;
- Tests and assesses learning outcomes using developed assessment methods;
- Kindles students' enthusiasm;
- Has knowledge equivalent to Master's level of the subject area in which they give lectures.

B Designing education

- Plays an active role together with the responsible lecturer in deciding how the subject is taught;
- Begins to develop their own ideas about the subject area.

C Leadership in educational development

- Is able to contextualise their own subject within the programme of study and recognise its relation to other subjects;
- Develops a personal vision for educational development and the social mission of education and relates it to the vision for education.

D Organising education and collaboration

- Is part of a teaching team and actively takes part in education-related meetings;
- Works well with colleagues and shows commitment.

E Quality assurance: reflective & learning capacity

- Draws attention to areas of improvement in teaching and specifies these during meetings with the responsible lecturer;
- Is open to feedback from colleagues and students, and able to deal with it appropriately and incorporate it;
- Is able to systematically reflect on their own experiences and can find solutions to problems in their own practice;
- Is aware of their own values, context and perspectives: self-knowledge is essential for good teaching;
- Is able to reflect on their own teaching and discuss this with colleagues, identify their strong and weak points, formulate teaching issues, and methodically work on this in a personal development plan.

Career

Career phase

- A novice lecturer is a beginning teacher at the start of their career as a teacher¹, who has at least a Master's degree in the subject area being taught. In this phase, the novice lecturer develops into a mid-level lecturer;
- As a guideline, the corresponding job profiles are²: lecturer 4, PhD student, postdoc and visiting lecturers with limited teaching tasks.

Formal role

Lecturer (or junior lecturer)

Career development

- Develops to mid-level lectureship through an accumulation of experience, support and training;
- Supports more experienced lecturers (professionally mature to teaching innovator/specialist);
- Is responsible for other tasks such as organising working weeks, project weeks, etc.;
- Has attended the start-to-teach day within the first six months of starting their lectureship;
- Begins the UTQ within one year.
Please note: PhD students may follow part or all of the UTQ programme as part of their 30 ECTS training right.

¹ This explicitly involves the beginning phase of the teaching component of somebody's career. It is entirely possible that somebody giving their first lecture is no longer considered 'junior' in the research component of their career.

² No rights can be derived from this general guideline. The tasks that someone performs do not always strictly correspond to the profile. Performing agreed tasks in the context of developmental goals and interests do not automatically result in promotion entitlements.

Phase 2. From mid-level lecturer to reflective teaching professional

Characteristics

A Teaching

- Is able to implement, within certain teaching forms and situations, a teaching programme in which students are encouraged to develop knowledge, insights, skills/competences and an academic attitude towards studying and conducting research;
- Makes effective use of more complex teaching skills, can respond to the different perspectives in the group and is able to fulfil the requisite range of teaching roles, such as role model, supervisor and feedback provider;
- Is able to apply different and new assessment methods and analyse learning outcomes;
- Kindles students' enthusiasm across all fields in their subject area and is able to bring individual students' attention to their qualities and talents;
- Has Master's-level knowledge of the subject area in which they give lectures and has extensive knowledge of branches in the subject area, including the latest developments.

B Designing education

- Is able to further develop – within a set framework – a fruitful learning environment and associated course-level teaching programme, including an assessment programme that promotes active academic learning;
- Is able to justify the choices of the various design components in education with reference to theory, experiences, evaluations and comments from colleagues;
- Effectively coordinates learning objectives, subject content, teaching activities and assessment procedures within the wider context of the programme of study.

C Leadership in educational development

- Is able to justify the choices they make in organising the teaching programme with reference to the applicable vision for education;
- Can keep an overview of the relationship between a change in education and the resulting impact on the current programme of study and use this to their advantage;
- Participates in projects to innovate teaching and takes the initiative in developing new education;
- Works methodically in developing solutions, not only in their own immediate field of practice, but also in a broader sense, such as in the programme of study.

D Organising education and collaboration

- Contributes to the organisation of teaching as well as the development of teaching policy;
- Gives shape to the programme of study as a whole by taking a role in the organisation and collaborating with other course coordinators;
- Stimulates and guides novice lecturers in implementing, designing and redesigning teaching and contributes to the reflection of colleagues (particularly new ones).

E Quality assurance: reflective & learning capacity

- Works systematically, purposefully and visibly on the effectiveness of teaching and maximising the students' studying achievements. Assesses the quality of their own teaching using the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle at course level;
- Has the ability to assess teaching situations and act accordingly, using resourcefulness and tact (pedagogical and otherwise);
- Proactively takes advantage of additional opportunities to develop themselves with respect to teaching, such as by reading professional literature, attending conferences and participating in training;
- Is eager to learn and translates feedback on their approach and experiences from professional practice into teaching;
- Can plan and justify their own development;
- Draws attention to relevant developments and situates these in the context of their own development.

Career

Career phase

- Has ample experience in giving shape to and implementing teaching independently.
- Usually has three to five years of teaching experience;
- Performs additional work activities within their role and the scope of their duties, such as supervising novice lecturers and matters pertaining to the organisation of education;
- As a guideline, the corresponding job profiles are³: lecturer 3, assistant professor 2.

Formal roles

Depending on their position and experience, a lecturer can take on the following roles in this phase:

- Member of department-level teaching work groups;
- Member of the programme committee;
- Member of the Examination Board;
- Year group coordinator.

Career development

- Transitions from a mid-level lecturer to a reflective teaching professional by increasing their subject knowledge, accumulating experience, and receiving support and training (for example by obtaining the STQ).

³No rights can be derived from this general guideline. The tasks that someone performs do not always strictly correspond to the profile. Performing agreed tasks in the context of developmental goals and interests do not automatically result in promotion entitlements.

Phase 3. From reflective teaching professional to teaching innovator/specialist

Characteristics

A Teaching

- Ensures an inclusive learning environment in which different perspectives from the group add value to education;
- Has a solid vision of good teaching, possesses knowledge of current developments in the area of teaching, and experiments with new methods of teaching and assessment;
- Is largely responsible for implementing and assessing teaching;
- Has a deep understanding of the whole subject area and/or specialist knowledge of sub-areas.

B Designing education

- Develops teaching that is innovative in terms of its content and teaching style, appropriate to its social mission and the vision for education;
- Shapes and monitors the programme of study in general;
- Investigates the real and possible effects of improvements in the programme of study and assessment, making well-reasoned choices for the design and redesign of teaching on the basis of their findings.

C Leadership in educational development

- Is able to formulate a vision of their own subject area and contextualise this;
- Improves teaching based on new developments in their own subject area and effects of new and existing teaching applications;
- Leads innovations in teaching and justifies and provides reasoning for choices made on a non-course specific level;
- Monitors the relation and required coordination between teaching activities in different teams.

D Organising education and collaboration

- Has a large amount of responsibility for the organisation of teaching and plays an active role in giving shape to teaching policy;
- Actively participates in or leads faculty committees/project groups and actively seeks collaborations with other teaching innovators/specialists;
- Is able to keep a clear head when faced with different interests and opinions and can effectively deal with opposition;
- Actively involves and encourages mid-level and professionally mature lecturers in designing, redesigning, assessing and implementing teaching;
- Supports mid-level and professionally mature lecturers in implementing teaching and promotes colleagues' development and reflection on tasks.

E Quality assurance: reflective & learning capacity

- Using the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle, they monitor, maintain, assess and promote the quality of teaching provision and assessment on a non-subject specific level;
- Reflects on their own actions and strives to develop themselves both professionally and personally;
- Is able to play an active role in writing up a critical discussion document for the programme.

Career

Career phase

- Is a very experienced lecturer at Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU Amsterdam) with well-developed lecturing and organisational qualities;
- Usually has five to ten years of teaching experience;
- As a guideline, the corresponding job profiles are⁴: lecturer 2 - lecturer 1, assistant professor 1, associate professor 1 and 2.

Formal roles

Depending on their position and experience, a lecturer in this phase can take on the following roles:

- Chair of faculty-level teaching work groups;
- Member of faculty-level teaching work groups;
- Chair of the programme committee;
- Chair of the Examination Board;
- Minor coordinator;
- Director of Education.

Career development

In this phase, the reflective teaching professional develops into a teaching innovator/specialist through increasing expertise in the field of innovation and/or expertise in their own subject area. Depending on their position and scope of responsibility, the reflective teaching professional develops in the areas of teaching methodology, assessment, educational innovation and organisation, and training and supporting assistant professors.

In terms of teaching, the career of a lecturer in this phase can develop in two directions:

Specialist in teaching methodology

- Has excellent skills when it comes to both developing and implementing teaching;
- Is a recognised specialist in subject and educational development. In addition to this, they are an inspiration to students and an example to fellow lecturers;
- Possesses the STQ qualification, possibly complemented with the Educational Leadership Course.

Teaching innovator

- Has highly developed innovative qualities;
- Has a clear and solid vision of good teaching;
- Is able to connect and motivate lecturers around common objectives;
- Has a pioneering role when it comes to improving activities, approaches and materials within a department or programme;
- Contributes to developing and innovating teaching;
- Possesses the STQ qualification, possibly complemented with the Educational Leadership Course.

⁴ No rights can be derived from this general guideline. The tasks that someone performs do not always strictly correspond to the profile. Performing agreed tasks in the context of developmental goals and interests do not automatically result in promotion entitlements.

Phase 4. From teaching innovator/specialist to educational leader

Characteristics

A Teaching

- Is ultimately responsible for implementing and assessing teaching;
- Kindles students' enthusiasm in the aforementioned role;
- Has knowledge of the whole programme and also possesses specialist knowledge in their own sub-field, which they are able to connect to other subject areas and/or programmes.

B Designing education

- Is able to shape, implement and have implemented practical solutions to complex issues relating to teaching and content;
- Is ultimately responsible for the logical structuring of a complete Bachelor's or Master's programme design in terms of content and form within their own subject area.

C Leadership in educational development

- Is a recognised expert in educational development with regards to subject content and teaching;
- Can produce effective problem analyses of complex teaching-related issues;
- Recognises the effects of new teaching methods, both internally and externally, and uses this knowledge as a basis to initiate and manage developments in policy on a programme, faculty or university level as a whole;
- Embodies the faculty in its internal and external affairs, promoting the vision for education;
- Has an innovative mindset and encourages this in others;
- Maintains an overview so as to discern and make connections between developments in teaching and research.

D Organising education and collaboration

- Is ultimately responsible for the organisation of teaching, as well as the shaping and formulation of teaching policy on a programme or faculty level;
- Actively and noticeably supports and stimulates the development of teaching and lectureship;
- Supports and provides general and functional supervision to work groups and project groups on a faculty and university level, and in doing so acts as chair;
- Embodies the faculty and, by virtue of their attitude and behaviour, contributes to the development of a professional teaching culture;
- Fosters teamwork amongst lecturers and community building around teaching within and outside their own faculty;
- Feels responsible for the quality of the faculty's teaching.

E Quality assurance: reflective & learning capacity

- Is ultimately responsible for the PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Act) cycle on a programme and faculty level;
- Uses the PDCA cycle to improve teaching on a programme level and in terms of the programme of study;
- Aside from formal cycles, they monitor the quality of teaching performances in a broad sense and take action where required;
- Visibly reflects on their own actions and development of teams of instructors and encourages ongoing development of both.

Career

Career phase

- Is a very experienced, effective lecturer as well as an important player with a strategic role in teaching policy at VU Amsterdam;
- Is a recognised expert in educational development;
- Has highly developed teaching and leadership qualities and is able to carry through innovations and progress beyond their own department or faculty;
- Usually has at least five years of experience at the level of teaching innovator/specialist;
- As a guideline, the corresponding job profiles are⁵: lecturer 1 (if truly an expert), associate professor 1, full professor.

Formal roles

Alongside their formal roles in this phase, an educational leader may take on the following roles depending on their experience and position:

- Chair of teaching work groups at the faculty and/or university level;
- Chair of the programme committee;
- Chair of the Examination Board;
- Director of Studies;
- Portfolio holder for teaching.

Career development

- Switches foci within the tripartite structure of education-research-management in order to foster continuous development;
- Possesses the STQ qualification, complemented with the Educational Leadership Course.

⁵ No rights can be derived from this general guideline. The tasks that someone performs do not always strictly correspond to the profile. Performing agreed tasks in the context of developmental goals and interests do not automatically result in promotion entitlements.