Rewarding teaching in academic careers

Mapping the global movement for change

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Acknowledgements

The report is based on interviews with 131 leaders and change-makers from across the world, all of whom are engaged in improving the systems of evaluation, support and reward for university teaching. The interviewees contributed on the basis of anonymity so are not named here. However, the study would not have been possible without their generous support and input. Their contributions provided a wealth of insights and examples of innovative practice that have influenced the themes and focus of the report. However, space allows only for a selection of these examples.

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Executive Summary

Recent decades have seen growing calls to reform the criteria underpinning academic career progression, with concerns raised about the undervaluation of university teaching in appointment and promotion processes. A global shift is now underway, as pioneering research-intensive universities rethink how they reward teaching in academic careers and introduce initiatives that could redefine how teaching is supported and recognised across the sector.

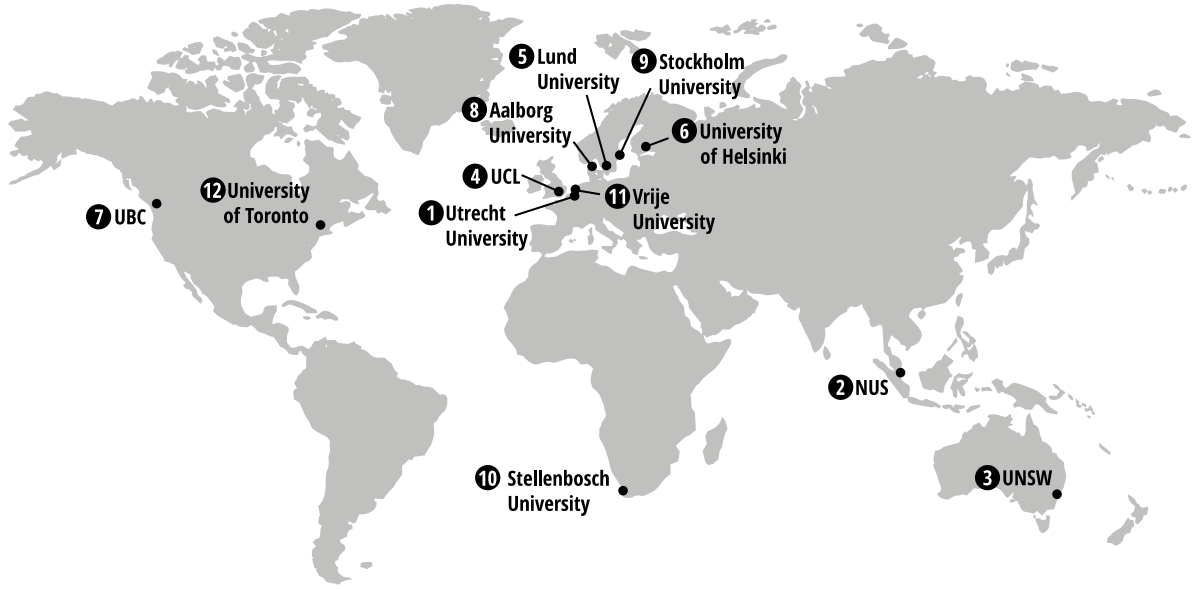
This report is designed to inspire and inform universities seeking to transform their systems of reward for university teaching. It is structured in two sections:

Section A maps the global movement for change and identifies the front-runner universities;

Section B explores how these leading universities are addressing key barriers to change.

The report explores the evolving landscape of how university teaching is supported, evaluated and rewarded within academic careers. It draws on interviews with over 130 leaders and change-makers from 26 countries who are actively engaged in reshaping reward systems in their university/region.

Section A points to a sector in flux, with universities worldwide driving root-and-branch changes to how they reward university teaching. Interviewees were asked to identify universities at the forefront of this change. In all, 127 universities from 32 countries were identified. Of these, 38 institutions were identified by three or more interviewees and are referred to as the sector's *front-runners* hereafter. The 12 most frequently cited universities are presented in the chart below. As the chart indicates, the momentum for change is starting to take root in key geographic pockets, particularly Northern Europe. These far-reaching changes are driven by a range of factors, including institutional pressures (for example, rising student tuition fees and student expectations), as well as long-standing concerns about how teaching achievement is recognised in academic careers.



1 Utrecht University
Cited by almost one in four interviewees, Utrecht University was noted for its educational culture, blended career pathway and educational leadership programmes.

2 NUS
NUS was cited for the thoughtful redesign of its *Educator Track* career pathway as well as the *External Review Panel* established to evaluate candidates on this track.

3 UNSW Sydney
UNSW was noted for the design of its *Education Focused* pathway and its success in establishing collegial communities of practice amongst this academic group.

4 UCL
UCL was noted for the quality of its *Academic Careers Framework* that allows educational impact to play a more prominent role in academic career advancement.

5 Lund University
Lund University was commended, in particular, for the design and regional impact of the *Pedagogical Academy* in the university's Faculty of Engineering.

While practices at front-runner universities reflect their own institutional contexts and cultures, their approaches share common features. For example, cross-institutional partnerships play a major role in driving and supporting change to reward systems at almost all front-runners. Most have also adopted unified standards for university teaching that establish a shared understanding of the advancement criteria that apply across all university processes, including educational development, performance reviews, and promotion. In addition, almost all front-runners are actively embedding one or more of the following three development priorities: *collegiality* (redesigning reward systems to incentivise collaborative educational cultures and practices); *educational leadership* (establishing clear definitions, support systems and routes to career progression via educational leadership); and *flexible career pathways* (supporting and promoting diverse academic careers as shaped by individual areas of interest and expertise). These shared themes are threaded throughout the report.

Section B provides a detailed guide to how front-runners are tackling four key challenges faced by universities seeking to improve the reward of teaching in academic careers:

1. **how to design robust academic career pathways** that appropriately promote and reward advancement in university teaching throughout academic careers. Most front-runners adopt one or more of three career pathway models: *blended career track* (a flexible pathway supporting diverse academic profiles and advancement on a single track); *education-focused career track* (a high-status pathway offering education-focused academics autonomy, robust advancement criteria and diverse progression opportunities); and *the Pedagogical Merit model* (a reward system operating in parallel to formal career pathways, offering recognition and salary increases for academics who meet a threshold level of 'pedagogical competence').
2. **how to evaluate university teaching** in ways that offer a robust and transparent appraisal of an academic's educational impact and achievement during appointments and promotions. The report highlights best practices in three core elements of the evaluation process: *defining standards* (the expectations and frameworks used to benchmark achievement and progression in university teaching); *demonstrating impact* (the tools used by academics to identify and showcase their impact and achievement in university teaching); and *assessing candidates* (the capacity of appointment/promotion committees to offer a reliable and informed assessment of the candidate's impact and achievement in university teaching).
3. **how to build effective support systems** that engage all academics – across diverse profiles, career stages and areas of expertise – in effective and continuous educational development. The report examines the strategies adopted at front-runner universities to: safeguard time for academics to engage in educational activities likely to enhance their careers, beyond their assigned 'teaching responsibilities'; harmonise practices across institutional processes; promote continuous professional growth; and foster educational leadership.
4. **how to drive and support sustainable change** in the face of cultural and structural barriers that work against the effective reward of university teaching. Success at front-runner universities is associated with three interrelated strategies: building institutional cultures that value and champion university teaching; fostering cross-institutional partnerships to share ideas, establish common standards and benchmark progress; and tracking the impacts of change to demonstrate measurable benefits and guide ongoing reforms.

Taken together, the findings from Sections A and B suggest that a unified approach that promotes collegiality and diversity, and is grounded in cross-institutional collaboration, can elevate the status of university teaching. As the global higher education sector evolves, these elements will be critical for ensuring that excellence in university teaching is recognised and rewarded in academic careers. It will also facilitate the national and global mobility of a new generation of academics whose impact and achievement in university teaching can more easily be tracked and evaluated.

Contents

Definitions used in the report:

- **academic profile:** the distinctive combination of an academic's areas of expertise and the relative focus they place on key academic domains such as research, university teaching and societal impact;
- **educational development:** the ongoing professional development of academics in university teaching;
- **front-runners:** the universities most consistently identified by the 130+ interviewees for their approach to evaluating, supporting and rewarding university teaching;
- **performance review:** appraisal of academics (typically held annually) by their line managers to reflect on their progress and plan their future development in key academic domains;
- **university teaching:** a term used throughout the report to cover all activities relating to teaching and learning at universities. Examples could include: curriculum development; teaching students; pedagogical research; student supervision; and policy making.

Acronyms used in the report:

CBS	Copenhagen Business School, Denmark
CoARA	Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment
DEI	Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
EF	Education-focused: academics on the education-focused pathway at UNSW
ERP	External Review Panel, Education-Focused Track, NUS, Singapore
ETP	Excellent Teaching Practitioner, LTH Pedagogical Academy, Lund University, Sweden
HERDSA	Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia
ISSOTL	International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning conference
LTH	Faculty of Engineering, Lund University, Sweden
NRO	Netherlands Initiative for Education Research, Netherlands
NTNU	Norwegian University of Science and Technology, Norway
NUS	National University of Singapore, Singapore
PSF	Professional Standards Framework, Advance HE, UK
PUC	Pontifical Catholic University of Chile, Chile
SoTL	Scholarship of Teaching and Learning
STQ	Senior Teaching Qualification, Dutch higher education sector
TU/e	Eindhoven University of Technology, Netherlands
U21	Universitas 21
UBC	University of British Columbia, Canada
UCL	University College London, UK
UNSW	University of New South Wales, Sydney, Australia
UCLA	University of California, Los Angeles, US
UTM	Universiti Teknologi Malaysia, Malaysia
UTQ	University Teaching Qualification, Dutch higher education sector
VU	Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, Netherlands

1. Introduction

1.1. Study context and focus

Recent decades have seen growing calls for far-reaching reform of the systems that underpin academic career advancement in universities worldwide. Specific concerns have been raised about the marginalisation of academics' impact in university teaching in the appointment and promotion processes. However, a remarkable shift is underway, as a growing number of pioneering institutions rethink how they reward university teaching in academic careers. The momentum for change has been accelerated as universities unite with national and global peers to drive cross-institutional reform to career pathways and promotion criteria.

This global movement has now reached a tipping point, with a critical mass of institutions engaged in ground-breaking initiatives to improve the support, evaluation, and reward of university teaching in academic careers. The transformative policies and practices at these leading-edge universities hold the potential to be adopted and mainstreamed across the higher education sector.

This report is designed to inspire and inform universities seeking to transform the ways that university teaching is rewarded in academic careers. It has two central aims:

1. **Global mapping:** to map the global movement for change and identify the key universities that the community is looking to for inspiration;
2. **Best practice guide:** to document practices at these leading universities and the strategies they use to address the key challenges that hinder the reward of university teaching.

The report offers a snapshot stocktake of the views and experiences of the university leaders and change-makers at the forefront of this global trend to improve the reward of university teaching. The evidence is based on the feedback generously provided by this global community of pioneers, including the identification of the most highly-regarded universities and systems in the field. All examples highlighted in the report were identified by at least three external interviewees as a source of inspiration to them or their institution.

Please note that activities to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) in academic reward systems are not covered in this report. DEI underpins the mission of higher education as a whole and therefore warrants an integrated analysis spanning research and university teaching that includes students, academics and support staff. In addition, pedagogical ideas or research aimed at improving the reward of university teaching are only included in this report if they are identified by interviewees to have had a direct impact on changes in practice at leading universities. As such, only publications repeatedly highlighted by interviewees as key sources of inspiration or information are cited in this report.

The study was supported and co-funded by a consortium of universities[1] engaged in (or planning for) major changes to the reward of university teaching. It was led and undertaken by an independent higher education consultant on behalf of the *Advancing Teaching*[2] network.

Please note that the term **university teaching** is used throughout the report to cover all activities relating to teaching and learning at universities. Examples could include: curriculum development; teaching students; pedagogical research; student supervision; and policy making.

1.2. **Study approach**

The snapshot study was undertaken between October 2023 and November 2024. The mapping process draws on one-to-one interviews with key informants from across the world, selected for their expert knowledge and first-hand experience of the context and challenges of changing university reward systems. The study was undertaken in two phases.

Phase 1 established the scope and focus of the review. Interviews (n=27) with educational leaders and academics from the study's seven co-sponsor institutions[1] identified common challenges faced by universities seeking to enhance the reward of university teaching. These challenges were further refined during the Phase 2 interviews and served as the framework for Section B of the report.

Phase 2 mapped global activity in the reward of university teaching and explored well-regarded practices in the field. Interviews were held with 104 leaders and change-makers from across 26 countries who are working to reform or improve the systems of evaluation, support and/or reward in their university/region. Based on the template in Appendix B, Phase 2 interview questions focused on two broad topics:

- **practice at their own institution:** exploring policies, practices and plans for changing how university teaching is evaluated, supported and rewarded at the interviewee's institution;
- **practices outside their own institution:** identifying and exploring the universities/systems they look to for inspiration in how to evaluate, support and reward university teaching.

The initial interviewees for Phase 2 were identified by Phase 1 interviewees and the author's knowledge of universities worldwide leading changes to academic reward systems. This group was asked to suggest additional interviewees with in-depth knowledge of highly-regarded reward systems for inclusion in the study. Priority was given to individuals recommended by three or more interviewees and those located in geographic regions not already represented in the interviews. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of Phase 2 interviewees by role and continent of their affiliated organisation; please note, Europe is the largest single region because European universities were disproportionately recommended by interviewees from all regions.

Together, the two phases of the study are informed by interviews with 131 individuals, who provide a unique source of insight into how universities worldwide are adapting their systems of reward. Insights into trends and exemplars from these interviews are used throughout the report. Anonymity was protected; interviews were conducted with the assurance that any shared opinions would not be attributed to specific individuals or institutions, except where explicit permission was granted by the interviewee.

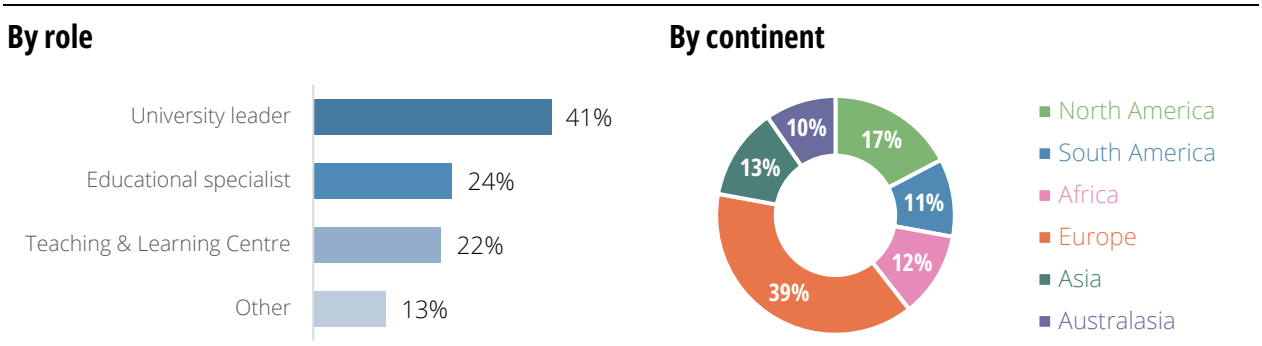


Figure 1. Breakdown of Phase 2 interviewees (n=104) by continent and role

1.3. **Structure of the report**

The report has two major sections, Sections A and B.

Section A offers insight into the scale and focus of the change to the reward of university teaching worldwide and identifies the 'front-runner' universities considered to be at the forefront of effective practice in this field. Chapter 6 summarises the four key challenges faced by universities seeking to improve the reward of university teaching, as identified by interviewees in Phases 1 and 2.

Section B explores how universities worldwide are addressing these challenges. Structured around the four challenge areas outlined in Chapter 6, Section B explores highly-regarded practices in the reward, evaluation and support of university teaching from across the world, focusing in particular on the front-runner universities. Short case studies are included throughout Section B to illustrate how the themes and practices are applied in practice in universities and higher education systems worldwide. A list of these case studies is provided in Appendix A (page 41).

SECTION A **GLOBAL MAPPING**:

Chapter 2. **How is the global sector changing?** This chapter introduces the focus and scale of changes currently underway or recently delivered across the global sector.

Chapter 3. **Why are universities driving change?** This chapter outlines the key drivers for universities to change their systems of rewarding university teaching, based on feedback from interviewees at universities engaged in reform.

Chapter 4. **Which are the front-runner universities?** This chapter identifies the universities that were most consistently identified by interviewees for the quality of their approach to evaluating, supporting and/or rewarding university teaching.

Chapter 5. **What distinguishes the front-runners?** This chapter outlines the common factors linking the priorities and practices at the front-runner universities.

Chapter 6. **What key barriers do universities face?** This chapter identifies four key challenges facing universities seeking to enhance the reward of university teaching.

Chapter 7. **What are the common elements of success?** Taking Section A and B together, this concluding chapter distils the common elements of successful change.

SECTION B **BEST PRACTICE GUIDE**:

Chapter 8. **How to design robust career pathways**. This chapter explores the career pathway models adopted at front-runner universities that are seen to offer flexible and effective advancement routes based on impact in university teaching.

Chapter 9. **How to evaluate university teaching.** This chapter outlines approaches adopted at front-runner universities to define, demonstrate and assess impact and achievement in university teaching during academic career progression.

Chapter 10. **How to build effective support systems.** This chapter examines systems at front-runner universities to support effective ongoing educational development.

Chapter 11. **How to drive and support sustainable change.** This chapter explores approaches adopted at front-runner universities to driving change to the reward of university teaching.

SECTION A
GLOBAL MAPPING

This section provides a high level view of how the global higher education sector is changing with respect to the reward of university teaching in academic careers.

The chapters in Section A are:

2. How is the global sector changing?

Interviewees were asked to describe the emerging trends in how university teaching is rewarded in academic careers. Their feedback suggested that the sector is at an inflection point. Interviewees noted how root-and-branch changes to the reward of university teaching, previously concentrated in universities where education had been a central focus, are now extending to universities of all types. Many of these changes have been initiated in the past five years.

Research-intensive universities with strong global profiles, particularly those outside the US, were frequently identified as leading these transformations. Indeed, interviewee feedback suggested that – if US universities are excluded – over a third of the top 200 universities in the *QS World University Rankings 2025*[3] are currently undergoing, or have recently implemented, systemic changes in how they reward university teaching. Examples from across the top 200 QS ranking include:

- **#3 University of Oxford, UK** is developing an *Academic Career and Reward Framework* designed "*to improve the career paths, workload, and reward and recognition of academics*"[4];
- **#19 University of New South Wales (UNSW), Australia** redesigned its academic career tracks in 2017[5] to create new research-focused, education-focused and combined pathways;
- **#93 Pontifical Catholic University of Chile (PUC), Chile** recently introduced new flexible academic career pathways to support progression across a wider range of academic profiles;
- **#181 Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM), Malaysia** rolled out systemic changes to its career pathways in 2019 in line with a government call[6] to 'diversify' academic careers.

These universities represent only a small sample of the reforms underway across the global higher education sector. In addition, many top-ranked universities worldwide – such as University of Sydney in Australia and the University of Manchester in the UK – are redesigning their education-focused pathways to offer this academic group greater autonomy, clearer advancement criteria, and more robust career progression opportunities. Change is also not limited to the redesign of academic career pathways; it also extends to the institutional infrastructure and cultures that underpin effective reward systems, including systems to evaluate university teaching (Chapter 9), support educational development (Chapter 10) and drive institutional change (Chapter 11).

The scale and ambition of change worldwide is undoubtedly significant. There is, however, no single unified solution. Instead, a range of approaches is emerging, each shaped by the institutional contexts and cultures in which they are developed. This diversity of contexts was a major theme in interviewee feedback. It highlighted the marked variations between countries and institutions in factors such as the levels of autonomy afforded to academics, the systems driving academic advancement (whether merit-based or vacancy-driven), and the capacity of universities to deviate from career pathway models determined at a governmental level. At the same time, progress is set against a backdrop of volatility in the higher education sector, impacting the environment in which university teaching is being rewarded. So, for example, while some countries (such as Norway) are seeing the roll-out of coordinated programmes of pedagogical recognition across the higher education sector, others (such as New Zealand) are facing widespread closures of university teaching and learning centres and the withdrawal of in-house pedagogical training programmes.

Despite these contextual differences, interviewee feedback points to several common features that distinguish universities at the forefront of global change. This report charts and explores these features, identifying and showcasing highly-regarded practices from across the world.

3. Why are universities driving change?

Interviewees were asked to describe the factors that precipitated changes to how university teaching is rewarded at their institution. Their feedback can be divided into two groups.

The **first group of interviewees** characterised the change effort at their institution as strategic and far-reaching, triggered by changes in the university's external environment or vision. These included major increases in student tuition fees, root-and-branch curriculum reforms, or concerns about the quality of university programmes. This fundamental realignment prompted widespread calls to "*improve the quality of our teaching and our teachers*", turning a spotlight on the status of university teaching and ways it was rewarded in academic careers. The resulting drive to "*professionalise teaching*" typically focused on one or both of the following priorities: (i) improving the status and career opportunities of education-focused academics; and (ii) incentivising all teaching-active academics to engage in continuous educational development. The response often included ambitious plans to redesign all academic career pathways.

The **second group of interviewees** characterised the change effort at their institution as incremental and non-linear. For them, the change was triggered by concerns about how academic achievement was assessed in university performance reviews and appointment/promotion processes, and the extent to which the assessment criteria reflected the university's values, priorities and vision. While the initial changes were often narrowly focused on assessment systems, they prompted wider discussions about the criteria for academic career advancement which, in turn, often led to more ambitious and far-reaching reforms. The initial target for change often focused on one or more of the following concerns about the university's existing assessment processes:

1. **an over-reliance on publication-based metrics** in the assessment of academics' impact and achievement in research, with universities seeking broader and more flexible indicators of quality that included consideration of factors such as societal impact and creativity;
2. **an over-reliance on student survey scores** as the primary source of evidence to assess impact and achievement in university teaching, with universities seeking to develop and adopt new assessment tools that draw on a wider range of evidence-based indicators;
3. **the over-representation of metrics that incentivise and reward individual achievement** in institutional processes, which run counter to the collegial cultures and collaborative methods that many universities are seeking to foster across all academic activities.

Interviewee feedback also suggested that university partnerships often play a crucial role in initiating and advancing reform activities worldwide. More than half of interviewees noted that their universities had been inspired and informed by peer institutions already implementing change or by broader university consortia promoting a shared vision of reform. While most of the coalitions cited are education-focused (as outlined in Chapter 11.2), some have their roots in major cross-institutional programmes that aim to reshape research assessment. One such example is the development of the *Working Group on Reforming Academic Career Assessment*[7]. This group had its origins in the *Coalition for Advancing Research Assessment*[8] (CoARA), a global university partnership rethinking the ways in which academic research is assessed. Similarly, interviewees discussing their university's involvement with the global *Open Science*[9] movement – which, for many, ultimately led to systemic changes to the design of institutional reward systems – often noted that "*we first got connected to Open Science because we wanted to find a different way of assessing research*". These coalitions have clearly played a pivotal role in changing the global conversation and inspiring change in universities worldwide.

4. Which are the front-runner universities?

The Phase 2 interviewees were asked to identify universities (outside their own) whose approach to rewarding university teaching had inspired and impressed them. Specifically, as noted in Appendix B, interviewees were asked:

> "*which universities have you taken inspiration from or consider to have taken a particularly effective approach to supporting, evaluating and/or rewarding teaching in academic careers?*"

In all, 127 universities from 32 countries were identified. The universities identified by three or more interviewees – 38 institutions in all – are referred to as the sector's **front-runners** hereafter. The 12 most frequently cited front-runner institutions are shown in Figure 1. While these institutions are unlikely to represent a complete list of global best practices – and this selection inevitably favours well-disseminated practices and universities with an existing global profile – it nonetheless offers valuable insight into the institutions and practices that are most influential across the sector.

1	Utrecht University (Netherlands)	7	UBC (Canada)
2	NUS (Singapore)	8	Aalborg University (Denmark)
3	UNSW (Australia)	9	Stockholm University (Sweden)
4	UCL (UK)	10	Stellenbosch University (S. Africa)
5	Lund University (Sweden)	11	Vrije University (Netherlands)
6	University of Helsinki (Finland)	12	University of Toronto (Canada)

Figure 1. The 12 institutions most frequently identified by interviewees as sources of inspiration, in rank order

The university most consistently identified was **Utrecht University** in the Netherlands, cited by almost one in four interviewees. Utrecht was characterised as "*a global front-runner*" in the support and reward of university teaching, with educational cultures and practices said to be "*engrained in the DNA of the organisation*". It was suggested that Utrecht had "*institutionalised many of the things that other universities are interested in but have never tried*", positioning it as an exemplar of how evidence-led and pioneering practices can be put into practice. These policies and practices include, for example: (i) the university's recent pivot to employing all staff – academics and support staff alike – on a new single flexible career pathway that emphasises leadership, team spirit, and impact[10]; and (ii) the quality of educational development programmes offered by the university's *Centre for Academic Teaching and Learning*[11], particularly those focused on nurturing educational leadership like the *Senior Fellow Programme*[12]. Interviewees also pointed the quality of Utrecht's institutional leadership and world-class research base in education.

The **National University of Singapore** (NUS) was cited by around one in seven interviewees, who highlighted the university's "*leadership in changing its education-focused [career] track*" in 2015. Interviewees pointed, in particular, to the thoughtful design of the progression criteria used to underpin this *Educator Track* as well as the *External Review Panel* established to evaluate candidates for appointment to or promotion on this track. Many cited the calibre of the membership of this panel – noted to comprise "*some truly great names in the world of education*" – as an indicator of the esteem in which the NUS *Educator Track* reforms are held worldwide.

A summary of interviewee feedback on other highly-regarded institutions is given below:

- **University of New South Wales (UNSW), Australia** was noted for the design of its *Education Focused* (EF)[13] pathway and its success in establishing communities of practice amongst this academic group: "*they have created a community of scholars and a place for those scholars to live… they have champions who are proudly education-focused*".
- **University College London (UCL), UK** was noted for the quality and flexibility of its new academic career pathways[14] that allow contributions to education to play a more prominent role in career advancement. Interviewees also pointed to a long-standing institutional commitment to educational development and innovation across UCL.
- **Lund University, Sweden** was commended, in particular, for the establishment of the *Pedagogical Academy*[15] in the university's Faculty of Engineering (LTH), which was noted to have "*inspired many in Sweden and across the world*" to think in new ways about how to incentivise and reward educational excellence.
- **University of Helsinki, Finland** was highlighted as "*a very education-minded university where teaching efforts are valued*", with a reputation for "*strong teacher development programmes*" and *"making [educational] change based on the evidence collected*" through tools developed in-house such as the *UniHow*[16] system.
- **University of British Columbia, Canada** was commended for its *Educational Leadership* career track[17] and deep commitment to "*championing and professionalising*" university educators. In the words of one interviewee, "*they are explicit about what constitutes 'educational leadership', even the name underlines that this is not just about 'educational labour'*".
- **Aalborg University, Denmark** was characterised as "*a living lab for research in problem-based learning*", with a long-standing commitment to supporting "*educational innovation and development of teachers*". It was also noted for its application of the new Danish framework[18] that establishes common national standards for excellence in university teaching.
- **Stockholm University, Sweden** was recognised for "*the educational research expertise*" within its *Centre for the Advancement for University Teaching*[19], which has established programmes such as the *Pedagogical Ambassador Project*[20] that "*buys out time for [academics] to make the education changes that matter most to their departments*".
- **Stellenbosch University, South Africa** was characterised as being "*alive with a long culture of academic development and support*", with a focus on "*the person as well as the teacher*" in educational development programmes such as their *Teaching Fellowships*[21].
- **Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam (VU), Netherlands** was commended for the design of its new academic career pathways[22] as well as the clarity with which these changes have been communicated. Interviewees also noted the quality and flexibility of VU's continuous professional development in education[23] including the integration of one-to-one coaching.
- **University of Toronto, Canada** was noted for its leadership's commitment to education and "*the very active teacher community where teachers learn from and with each other*" and the "*extensive use of [teaching] portfolios for tenure and promotion*".

The priorities and practices at these universities, as well as others consistently cited by interviewees, are discussed in more depth in Section B of this report.

It should also be noted, however, that despite the global recognition and global profile of these front-runner universities, interviewees at these institutions were clear to point out that "*we still have a long way to go*".

5. What distinguishes the front-runners?

Interviewee feedback was used to explore the features shared by front-runner universities – the 38 institutions cited by three or more interviewees for the quality of their approach to rewarding university teaching. One striking feature is their diversity of approach. While many of these universities are actively engaged in cross-institutional partnerships, the policies and practices developed by each are distinct to their own institutional context and culture. These well-regarded universities share a common vision and direction of travel, but the design of academic career pathways and the major targets for change vary considerably between institutions.

Despite these differences in approach, the front-runner universities share four common features.

The **first feature** is their evidence-led approach to educational innovation. A striking number of the front-runners – such as Aarhus University, Stellenbosch University and Utrecht University – were noted for their global profile in the *Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (SoTL)[24]. Many are also driving systemic curricular reforms that build on pioneering in-house educational research, such as the *Connected Curriculum*[25] reforms at UCL that were rolled out alongside the university's new *Academic Careers Framework*[14]. Rooted in this shared evidence-base, most front-runner universities are engaged in formal and informal collaborations with peer institutions at national and global levels. In a theme highlighted throughout this report, these cross-institutional partnerships appear to play a major role in driving and supporting change to reward systems at almost all front-runners.

The **second feature** shared by front-runner universities is their priorities for development. Almost all universities repeatedly cited for their approach to rewarding university teaching are currently actively promoting and embedding one or more of the following priorities:

- **collegiality:** a key theme of interviewee feedback was the misalignment between traditional criteria for academic advancement, which typically incentivise individual achievement, and the growing emphasis on collective or team-based pedagogies at universities worldwide. In response, many front-runners are redesigning reward systems to incentivise collaborative cultures and practices across the academic community. So, for example, collegiality is a key assessment criterion for acceptance into the *LTH Pedagogical Academy*[15] at Lund University.
- **educational leadership**: defined by UBC as activities that "*advance innovation in teaching and learning with impact beyond one's classroom*"[26], the importance of fostering, supporting and rewarding educational leadership is a prominent thread across many front-runner universities. In addition to establishing clear definitions of educational leadership – and step-by-step guidance on how academics can progress to the highest rungs of the academic career ladder through their impact in university teaching – many have designed and embedded new training, mentorship, and support systems to facilitate such advancement. The educational leadership programme most commonly cited by interviewees was the *Senior Fellow*[12] programme at Utrecht University.
- **flexible career pathways:** another priority shared by front-runner universities is the drive to support and promote diversity in academic careers. Many, for example, have designed career pathways that offer flexibility in the emphasis that academics can place on different domains – research, university teaching, societal impact, etc. Some front-runners are also moving away from offering a separate education-focused pathway, and have instead introduced a unified pathway for all academics that supports progression via a range of academic domains. So, for example, many Dutch universities are embedding a single, unified career track designed to promote career diversity and flexibility.

The **third feature** distinguishing many of the front-runners is their adoption of unified institution-wide standards or frameworks for university teaching. These standards establish a common language and shared understanding of the criteria for advancement that apply across all university functions and processes, including performance reviews, educational development and promotion. It was noted that this integrated approach allows "*academics to easily find themselves on the framework*" and eliminates the need for them to "*constantly adjust to different language and different priorities*" for career development depending on the university function with which they engage. An increasing number of universities worldwide – from the University of Helsinki[27] in Finland to the University of Oregon[28] in the US – have embedded such common standards across all institutional functions and schools. It is noteworthy that universities consistently cited for clearly communicating their progression opportunities in university teaching – such as VU in the Netherlands[22] – are often those that have adopted institution-wide standards or frameworks in university teaching. In developing these standards, many front-runner universities have drawn heavily on frameworks developed through national and global cross-institutional partnerships, as outlined in Box 1.

Box 1: **Adoption of cross-institutional standards and frameworks**

More than half of the front-runner universities have implemented or modified cross-institutional standards or frameworks to scaffold progression in university teaching within their evaluation and reward systems. Many are in countries where universities have come together to co-design these shared standards. For example, in Denmark, the *Framework for Advancing University Pedagogy*[18] was co-designed by the national academic community[29] to support and guide progression on the basis of impact in university teaching. Since its launch in 2021, this framework has been incorporated into the processes to support and reward university teaching in all eight Danish universities. In Sweden, a shared definition of 'pedagogical competence'[30] has been embedded in the design of teaching portfolios, career progression criteria and *Pedagogical Academies*[31] in many universities across the country.

Many front-runners are also engaged in global networks that coalesce around shared standards or frameworks in university teaching. Notable examples include the *Professional Standards Framework* (*PSF*)[32] developed by *Advance HE*[33] and the *Career Framework for University Teaching*[34] developed by the *Advancing Teaching*[2] network. A significant number of front-runner universities, whether formally or informally affiliated with these networks, have adopted these frameworks to guide the design of their institutional systems for evaluation, professional development and/or career progression.

Interviewee feedback pointed to important benefits to establishing and adopting such shared cross-institutional standards in university teaching, including the capacity to:

- **develop and share educational resources** that align with national priorities and are more cost-efficient to produce and maintain collectively than individually. Examples include cross-institutional training courses such as the *Lighthouse Strategic Educational Leadership*[35] programme.
- **establish a common language** that harmonises institutional systems and processes, such as promotion criteria, professional development activities, and evaluation systems. This common language also supports the creation of cross-institutional support systems and communities of practice focused on common interests or challenges. Examples include the national training programme for external 'pedagogical assessors' in Sweden[36].
- **enhance academic mobility** by aligning standards and progression frameworks, enabling universities to evaluate, recognise, and value the educational achievements of external candidates for appointment. Such alignment could help to establish consistency in the recognition and reward of university teaching across institutions.

It should be noted that these common standards and framework are often very flexible, and afford universities considerably space to adapt them to their own institutional context and culture.

The **fourth feature** connecting many front-runner universities is their geographic concentration. While front-runners appear in almost every continent, they were not evenly spread. Interviewee feedback suggested that the momentum for change to the reward of university teaching is starting to take root in key geographic pockets. This includes a cluster of countries in south-east Asia (notably Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia) and north and western Europe as well as Canada and Australia. Elsewhere the pace of change was seen to be slower. Most striking was the paucity of front-runner universities identified in the US. However, the focus on rethinking how 'teaching excellence' is defined and evaluated at an increasing number of US universities was noted to offer a crucial springboard for wider change in the future (as described in Section 9.2).

The geographic distribution of front-runner universities was further explored by noting the country locations of the 127 universities cited by interviewees. Figure 2 presents the top five countries identified. As it indicates, universities in Northern Europe dominated the list. It is notable that three of these countries – the Netherlands, Sweden and Denmark – have recently engaged in national collective initiatives to reform how university teaching is evaluated or rewarded. In particular, many in the global community appear to be looking to the Netherlands as a key source of inspiration and information – almost two-thirds (64%) of interviewees included a Dutch university and/or the Dutch higher education system amongst their recommendations. Following the launch of a groundbreaking position paper in 2019[37], all Dutch research-intensive universities have embarked on root-and-branch reform to their systems of reward (as described in Chapter 11.2).

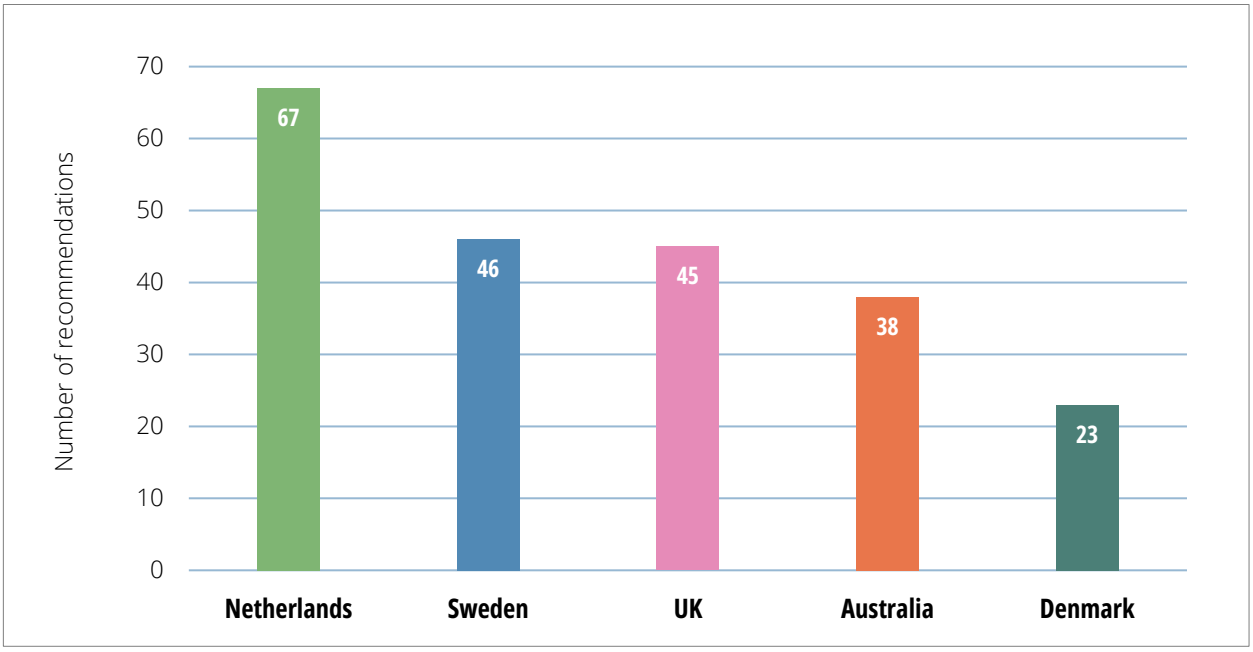


Figure 2. Top five countries represented amongst all interviewee recommendations

Indeed, national and global cross-institutional partnerships appear to play a crucial role in building consensus for change amongst many front-runner universities. These national and global coalitions enable universities to share the risks of systemic reform and generate a momentum that would prove difficult for universities working alone. In the words of one interviewee: "*these universities are setting a new standard [for rewarding university teaching] and showing that it can be done without jeopardising your position in research… this is a game-changer*".

The **four distinguishing features** outlined above were prominent themes in the interviewee feedback and are threaded throughout the good practices explored in Section B.

6. What key barriers do universities face?

Interviewees from Phase 1 and Phase 2 of the study were asked to identify the major barriers facing the effective reward of university teaching at their institutions. All interviewees – including those based at universities recognised as front-runners – reported wide-ranging challenges.

Barriers repeatedly highlighted fell into four interrelated areas, as summarised in Table 2.

1 **How to design robust academic career pathways** that appropriately and effectively reward academics' impact and achievement in university teaching. Interviewees noted particular challenges faced at their institutions in:

- establishing robust and clearly articulated criteria for career progression;
- recognising diverse academic profiles, as shaped by individual areas of interest and expertise, and supporting career progression for all members of this community;
- ensuring that all teaching-active academics, regardless of role, are expected to improve their impact in university teaching as they advance in their careers;
- ensuring that educational-focused roles are not seen as 'low-status' or associated with high teaching loads, low autonomy and few opportunities for career progression.

2 **How to evaluate impact in university teaching** in ways that are robust, transparent and applicable across disciplines, academic profiles, and career stages. The majority of interviewees pointed to weaknesses in how university teaching was defined and/or evaluated at their institutions, often suggesting that these issues have contributed to "*a devaluing of teaching in the whole tenure and promotion process*". Feedback focused on three stages of this process:

a) how standards in university teaching are **defined**. It was suggested that, without clear standards in university teaching and transparency in the criteria underpinning career progression, academics struggle to plan their career development and universities struggle to support and reward contributions in this domain.

b) how impact and achievement are **demonstrated.** Interviewees pointed to an over-reliance on crude or proxy measures of impact, like student surveys, which undermine and devalue career progression on the basis of university teaching. They called for new flexible evaluation systems that are robust and straight-forward to implement.

c) how universities **assess** candidates during appointment and promotion. Feedback suggested that university decision-makers, such as Department Heads and promotion committee members, often struggle to assess contributions in university teaching in ways that are informed and consistent. With many such leaders having themselves progressed via impact in research, it was suggested that many were "*uncomfortable and out of their depth*" when seeking to assess the educational impact of others.

3 **How to build effective support systems** that engage academics across diverse profiles, career stages and areas of expertise in educational development. In particular, interviewee pointed to challenges faced in:

- **how to safeguard time for educational development.** Interviewee feedback suggested that a key barrier to career progression in university teaching is the limited time available for academics to devote to activities such as educational innovation or development beyond their assigned 'teaching workload'.

	• **how to harmonise institutional practices.** Interviewees highlighted the fragmented nature of many educational development programmes, which are often disconnected from broader institutional systems (such as promotion policies) and departmental practices (such as annual performance reviews). • **how to promote continuous educational development.** Interviewee feedback suggested that many academics are reluctant to pursue educational development beyond the institution's mandatory teaching qualification, often prioritising research over university teaching in their further professional growth. • **how to foster educational leadership.** Interviewee feedback suggested that many universities struggle to offer programmes to foster and support educational leadership, particularly where there are few existing education-focused role models in senior academic positions to act as champions and mentors.
4	**How to drive and support sustainable change** in the face of cultural and structural barriers that work against the effective reward of university teaching. These include "*an unspoken belief that research will always come first, no matter what*". Interviewees noted that the failure of past institutional efforts to improve the reward of university teaching could also contribute to "*a culture of mistrust and scepticism*" over the effectiveness of new systems and/or the sincerity of university leaders who propose them. A related concern was the long-term engagement of the university's leadership in the change processes, particularly where the timeframe for implementation extended beyond the period of office of the leaders who championed them. Interviewees spoke about the "*fragility*" of the reforms in the face of a change of institutional leadership. Some also suggested that the best practices for which their university is known were a legacy of structural reforms instituted by previous leaders, but which may not be actively endorsed – or even appreciated – by new university leadership. Feedback overall focused on the need for practical mechanisms to: • establish an institutional culture that values university teaching; • learn from and contribute to cross-institutional partnerships promoting reform to the reward of university teaching; • assess the impacts of changes to the reward of university teaching.

Table 2. The four major challenges facing the effective reward of university teaching, as identified by interviewees

Insights into how front-runner universities have addressed each of the four challenge areas outlined in Table 2 are presented in Section B of the report.

It should be noted that one additional challenge, repeatedly highlighted by interviewees, is not included in Table 2 as it cannot be addressed through institutional strategy alone. Many interviewees expressed concern about the **lack of institutional resources** available to invest in support and reward systems, such as new educational development programmes or increased ongoing salary costs for academics promoted for their contributions to university teaching. Some interviewees also highlighted specific financial challenges arising from sharp reductions in government support for teaching and learning in higher education. For example, several interviewees based in Australia spoke about the "*devastating effects*" of the closure of the national *Office for Learning and Teaching* in 2016 which was noted to have severely impacted university infrastructures for supporting and rewarding educational development.

7. What are the common elements of success?

Section A mapped how the reward of university teaching is evolving across the global sector. Drawing on interviews with leaders and change-makers, it outlined the reforms being undertaken and their underlying drivers. It identified the universities seen to be leading the sector and noted the features that they share. It also pointed to key challenges and barriers faced by universities seeking to enhance the recognition and reward of university teaching.

Section B builds on this global review. It focuses on the challenges that are inhibiting change (as identified in Chapter 6). Again drawing on expert interviews, Section B describes the ways in which front-runner universities are addressing them.

Taken together, the findings from Section A and the practices explored in Section B offer insight into the ingredients of success in improving the recognition and reward of university teaching. As illustrated in Figure 3, these common elements relate to the design and strength of the institution's career pathways, support systems, and culture. Although no single front-runner university has fully embedded all three components, they are consistently associated with success.

Interviewee feedback made clear that the widespread adoption of these elements, particularly when rooted in shared standards and models, would transform the status of university teaching. It would also help to foster the national and global mobility of a new generation of academics whose impact and achievement in university teaching can more easily be tracked and evaluated.

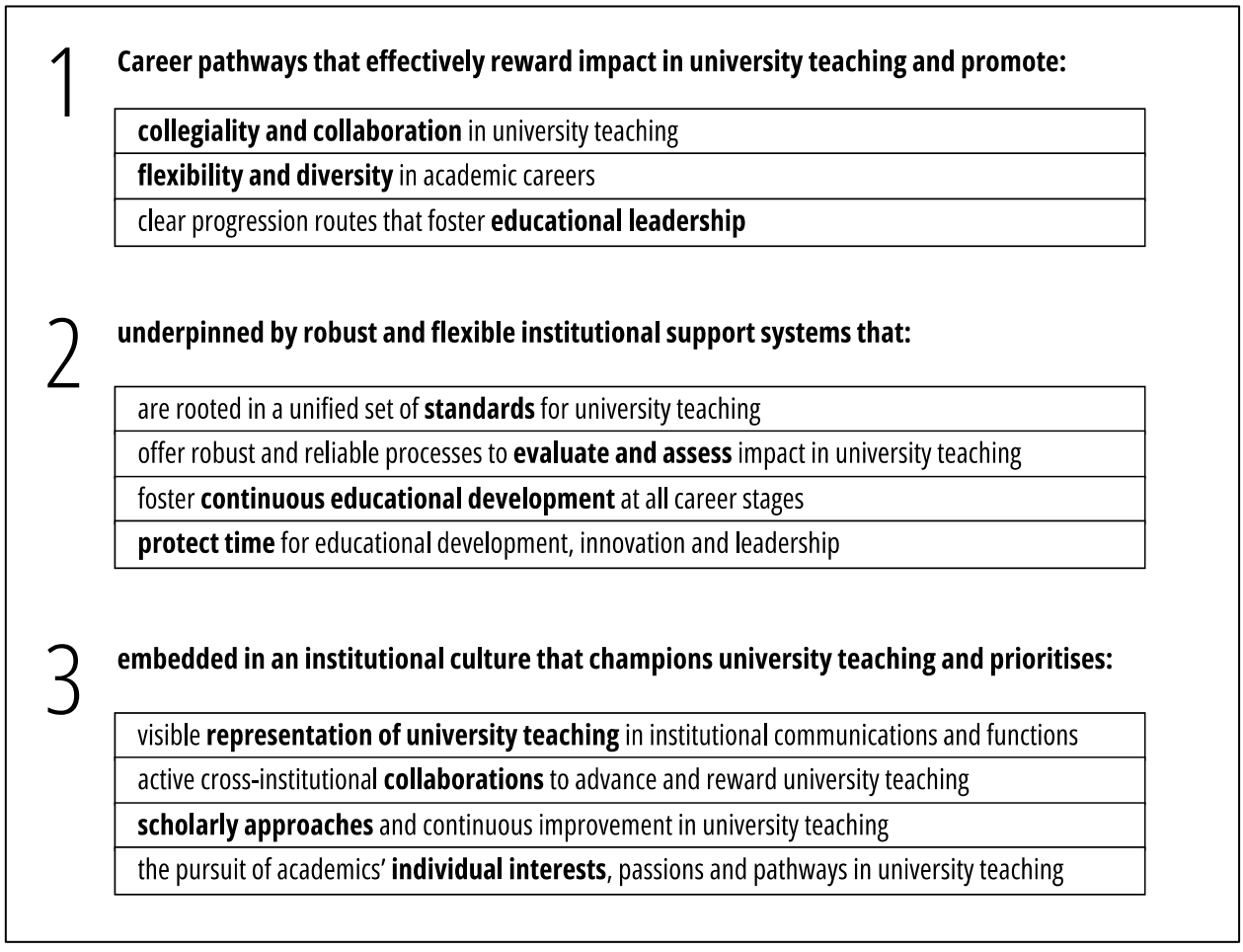


Figure 3. Common ingredients of universities offering effective systems of reward for university teaching

SECTION B
BEST PRACTICE GUIDE

Section B explores highly-regarded practices in the reward, evaluation and support of university teaching from across the world, focusing on the front-runner universities.

It is structured around the four major barriers facing the effective reward of universities teaching, as identified by interviewees (and outlined in Chapter 6). Each chapter draws on feedback from interviewees at front-runner universities and highly-regarded cross-institutional initiatives. Chapters open with a summary of the key challenge area identified before describing ways in which the challenge is being addressed at front-runner universities.

Outlined below are the four chapters in Section B along with a list of the case studies included:

8. How to design robust career pathways

The challenge faced:

Interviewees highlighted key challenges associated with designing academic career pathways that appropriately recognise educational contributions and embed an expectation that all teaching-active academics, regardless of role, consistently improve the quality and impact of university teaching as they progress in their careers. Many suggested that promotion criteria in university teaching were often opaque and inconsistently applied, leaving many academics struggling to plan their educational career development.

Interviewees also highlighted the challenge of ensuring that education-focused roles are not perceived as "*low-status career dead-ends*", associated with high teaching loads, limited autonomy, and few opportunities for career advancement. Other barriers repeatedly noted included the inflexibility of existing career models to recognise non-traditional academic careers and the diverse ways through which academics can have positive impacts on university teaching.

This chapter explores the career pathway models most widely adopted at front-runner universities and the ways that they have addressed the challenges outlined above through their design and implementation. The approach taken by each of these universities is distinct, reflecting their different cultures, contexts and missions. However, the majority align with one or more of the following broad models, discussed in turn in the sub-sections that follow:

1. **blended career track:** a flexible pathway that supports a range of academic profiles and routes for career advancement on a single track;
2. **education-focused career track:** a dedicated high-status pathway for education-focused academics where career progression is guided by robust and clearly-articulated criteria;
3. **Pedagogical Merit model:** a reward system operating outside formal academic career pathways, offering recognition and (in most cases) a permanent increase in salary for academics who meet a threshold level of 'pedagogical competence'.

These three models are not mutually exclusive. Many of the front-runner universities combine two such models in their academic career pathways. For example, some institutions (such as UCL[14] in the UK) combine a blended career pathway with a separate education-focused track.

It should also be noted that, while career pathways have been fundamentally redesigned at most front-runner universities over the past 15 years, several limitations remain. For example, government legislation in some countries restricts the scope for root-and-branch change to academic career pathways. In Denmark, for instance, national policy mandates a single, fixed career pathway requiring academics to divide their time equally between research and university teaching. Furthermore, several interviewees noted that even where substantial reforms had been implemented, these changes were often applied only to academic promotions, not appointments. These interviewees suggested that the criteria to appoint new academics often still rested on their research impact and potential, with achievement and impact in university teaching only gaining prominence during the subsequent promotion of those academics. Their feedback made clear that progress in rewarding university teaching remains uneven across different regions and stages of the academic career.

8.1. **Blended career pathways**

A blended career pathway offers a single unified track with the flexibility to accommodate a diverse mix of academic roles and routes to progression. Academics are typically expected to meet a threshold level of competence in core activities, such as university teaching, research and institutional 'service'. Beyond these thresholds, however, each academic is able to adjust the weight they allocate to different academic domains to reflect their areas of interest and specialism. The principle of 'impact' is often central to the progression criteria underpinning blended career pathways and the ways in which academics are evaluated.

Around half of the front-runner universities have adopted some form of blended career pathway. Two broad variations in the design of blended pathway are adopted by this front-runner group.

The **first** (and by far most common) model allows academics to select the weighting allocated to core academic domains such as research, university teaching and societal impact. The flexibility afforded to academics varies considerably by university. Some use a points-based systems to enable academics to create a 'bespoke' balance of academic domains while others ask academics to select from one of a set of pre-defined 'academic profiles'. For example, academics applying for academic promotion at the University of Canterbury in New Zealand can select one of three profiles: *research-intensive*, *teaching-intensive*, and *balanced*. In many blended models, the threshold level of achievement/impact to be met in each non-specialist domain increases with career progression, meaning that all academics – regardless of profile – must progressively improve their impact in university teaching as they advance their career.

In some cases, the flexibility afforded to academics on blended tracks also increases with career progression. For example, at Eindhoven University of Technology (TU/e)[38], assistant professors are able to allocate 20% of their academic profile to their preferred specialism (with a 40% each pre-allocated to *research* and *teaching*) while this personal allocation increases to 40% at the full professor level (with pre-allocations of 20% to *research*, 20% to *teaching*, 10% to *leadership*, and 10% to *valorisation*). TU/e academics are asked to create a 'biographical sketch' of their individual profile and how this is reflected in the weightings they have selected (see Box 9, Chapter 9.3).

Several universities were consistently noted by interviewees for the design of their blended tracks. For example, many cited the new *Academic Careers Framework*[14] which was introduced at UCL in 2017 to guide and support the career progression of all academics. This framework is structured across four domains: *teaching*, *research*, *institutional citizenship* and *enterprise/external engagement.* Using this framework, academics on UCL's blended academic track are expected to meet a threshold level of impact in all four core domains, but beyond this, they have the flexibility to specify which domains should be considered as a *core* or *specialist* ability. Another university repeatedly highlighted for its blended pathway was VU[22] which many commended for the ways in which its design and flexibility are communicated to the academic community, as illustrated in Figure 4.

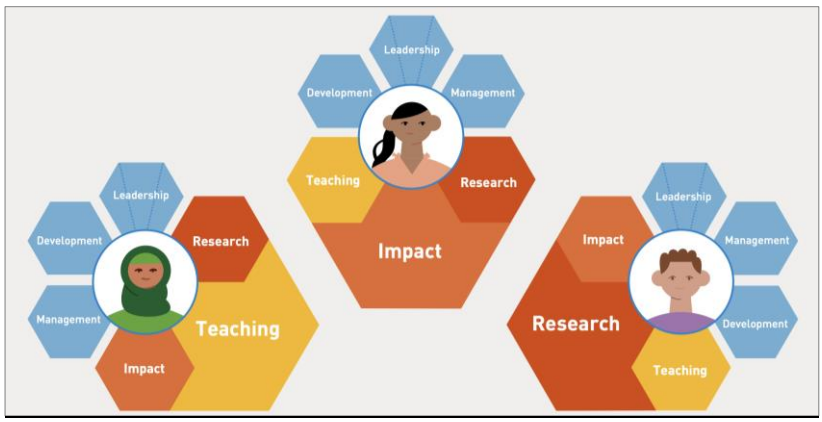


Figure 4. Example of how VU blended career pathway is communicated

The **second** model of blended career pathway adopted by front-runner universities does not rely on traditional academic domains – research, university teaching, institutional 'service' etc. – for its core building blocks. Instead, academics are asked to demonstrate impact in bespoke domains that reflect the university's distinctive priorities. Some front-runners using this model, such as Olin College of Engineering in the US, are recognised primarily for their education-focus. Olin's career framework[39] asks academics to demonstrate impact in three domains: (i) *building and sustaining the College*; (ii) *developing Olin students*; and (iii) *achieving external impact*. However, the example most often highlighted by interviewees was the TRIPLE model at Utrecht University, as outlined in Box 2.

Interviewee feedback pointed to several **strengths** of the blended career pathway model:

- it promotes a more diverse academic community, enabling individuals to pursue their own interests and specialisms within a unified track;
- it avoids a 'two-tier' system by ensuring that all academics – including research-focused and education-focused academics – are employed and promoted on a common pathway;
- it allows academics to shift their priorities and profiles over time without the need to change pathways, enabling more dynamic and flexible career development;
- it provides opportunities for all academics, including those with a strong research record, to develop expertise in university teaching, fostering a more cohesive educational community.

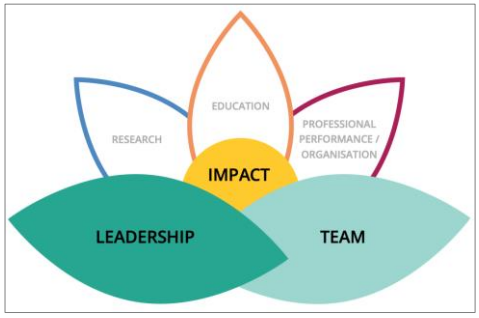
Interviewee feedback pointed to several **constraints or risks** of the blended pathway model:

- implementing a blended model requires significant engagement and consensus-building across the academic community, including with trade unions, senates, and other institutional bodies, often involving complex and prolonged negotiations;
- integrating all academics into a single pathway may limit the university's ability to offer targeted support for education-focused academics or build a distinct identity for this group.

Box 2: **TRIPLE model, Utrecht University, Netherlands**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **NON-TRADITIONAL BLENDED PATHWAYS**

Launched in 2021, Utrecht University's systemic changes to its reward systems are grounded in the *Open Science*[40] agenda and the principles of teamwork, integrity, responsibility and societal engagement. These principles are applied to both individual academics and teams through the *TRIPLE* model[41], which was described by one interviewee as "*a way of working, an attitude, not just an outcome*". Conceptualised around a lotus flower, the TRIPLE model is built on three core pillars:



- **leadership:** an expectation that academics will take on responsibility from early in their careers and help to build "*an open, transparent, inspiring, inclusive and safe environment*";
- **team spirit:** contribution to collegiality, collaboration and trust, rooted in a belief that a diverse community only thrives if the strengths and expertise of all its members are combined;
- **impact:** impact forms the centre of the lotus, with the petals representing the three core domains of *education*, *research* and *professional practice*. The relative size (or emphasis) attached to each petal varies according to each academic's area of specialisation.

In 2023, Utrecht University announced[42] that all academic and support staff would be employed on a single career pathway, with career progression for all employees guided by the TRIPLE model.

8.2. **Education-focused pathway**

An increasing number of universities worldwide offer a dedicated education-focused career track. Over the past decade, the proportion of academics employed on these pathways has risen sharply in countries such as the UK, Australia, and the US. Interviewee feedback made clear, however, that these tracks are often perceived as "*low status*" career routes, associated with high teaching loads, limited autonomy, insecure contracts, and few opportunities for career advancement. Over half of the 38 front-runners offer an education-focused pathway and most have fundamentally redesigned the track over the past decade to directly address these challenges. In many cases, this redesign has been undertaken as part of a strategic educational vision and curricular reform.

Education-focused pathways at the front-runner universities share several features that are often absent at comparable institutions worldwide. When describing the strengths of highly-regarded education-focused pathways, interviewees tended to point to one or more of the following features:

- **robust progression criteria:** the university clearly articulates the factors driving career progression along the pathway, with criteria that are robust, transparent and evidence-based. At more senior levels, the criteria define what it means to be an 'educational leader' – and distinguish this role from that of an educational manager or educational researcher. An educational leader has an impact on the student experience that extends beyond students they teach directly to achieve an institutional, national or even global reach. Pathways noted to offer such criteria included those at NUS in Singapore and UBC in Canada.
- **targeted community-building:** the university invests in network-building for education-focused academics at one or more of the following three levels: (i) within the education-focused community, to build inclusive, vibrant, cross-disciplinary communities of practice; (ii) with the university's wider academic community, to raise their profile and improve recognition of the contributions that education-focused academics make; and (iii) with the global education community, enhancing their networks, exposure to leading educational research, and global visibility. Institutions noted for such efforts include UNSW (see Box 13, Section 11.1).
- **diverse progression paths:** the university offers flexible career options for education-focused academics, recognising that these careers do not fit a one-size-fits-all model. Some explicitly define a range of career paths to showcase and promote varied trajectories. For example, Manchester Metropolitan University defines four distinct 'flavours' of education-focused career: *excellence in educational leadership*; *outstanding educational practice*; *high quality educational scholarship*, *funding and impact*; and *transforming education outcomes*. Similarly, Maastricht University[43] identifies six 'feathers' in which education-focused academics might excel and advance. Defining these alternative paths not only guides career planning but also helps promotion panels to recognise and assess diverse education-focused cases.
- **protected time for development:** the university implements policies to ensure that education-focused academics have dedicated time away from 'teaching' responsibilities to engage in activities that support career advancement, such as professional development, educational research, innovation, or professional travel (as explored in Chapter 10.1). For example, the University of Sydney recently advertised a series of 220 new education-focused academic roles[44] with a maximum of 70% workload allocation for 'teaching and teaching-related activities'[45]. This allocation explicitly leaves space for research and development.
- **developing educational leaders:** the university offers targeted support and training to foster the development of educational leaders. For example, UBC offers an *Educational Leadership Mapping Tool*[46] to help academics plan and track their leadership development, as well as a programme to build educational leaders[47], open to participants worldwide. Further details on how front-runner universities nurture educational leadership is given in Chapter 10.4.

Interviewee feedback suggests that these features – separately and in combination – help to build the autonomy, status, and progression opportunities of education-focused roles. They were also noted to foster trust within education-focused communities that their contributions will be valued by academic colleagues and recognised by university leadership.

Three universities were consistently cited by interviewees for the quality of their education-focused tracks: NUS (Singapore), UBC (Canada), and UNSW (Australia). UNSW's approach is outlined in Box 3.

Interviewee feedback pointed to several **strengths** of the education-focused pathway model:

- they are usually easier to establish or renew (compared to 'teaching and research' tracks) as such changes often do not affect the wider academic community or require broad approval;
- grouping education-focused academics within a dedicated pathway offers several benefits: (i) universities can provide targeted support to this group; (ii) investment can be directed to rapidly building capacity in university teaching; and (iii) education-focused academics can more easily form a cohesive community and unified voice to advocate for change.

Feedback pointed to several **constraints or risks** of the education-focused pathway model:

- the risk that such tracks become low-status routes, with high teaching loads, insecure contracts, limited career progression, and few options to switch to other pathways;
- the risk of an emerging divide between the university's research and education functions and the associated perception that university teaching is largely the responsibility of education-focused academics;
- the risk of stalled progress along this pathway due to the scarcity of senior educational roles and lack of established leaders who can act as role models across different disciplines.

Box 3: **University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney), Australia**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **EDUCATION-FOCUSED ACADEMIC CAREER PATHWAYS**

UNSW is one of the 'Group of Eight' highly-ranked Australian research-intensive universities. In 2015, UNSW set out a new strategy[5] to establish itself as a global leader in both research and education by 2030. A core component of this strategy was to elevate the value and status of education across the university, supported by root-and-branch reform to institutional reward systems.

Two years later, UNSW launched three new academic career tracks – *research-focused*, *education-focused*[13] (EF) and combined *research and education* pathways – with each offering a route to full professorship. Built on a points-based system, the tracks share a common set of expectations across three domains: *education*; *research and social engagement*; and *global impact and leadership*. The *Career Framework for University Teaching*[34] informed the progression criteria in the education domain, with advancement based on a candidate's widening sphere of impact. Today, there are around 540 EF academics at UNSW, representing 21% of the academic community.

Embedding opportunities for identity formation, professional development and career progression across this new EF cohort has been a major focus for UNSW. The university mapped each of its educational expectations and promotion criteria for EF academics onto existing professional development support at the university and worked to fill the gaps in provision. This included the introduction of new competitive grants to support pedagogical innovation and attendance at educational conferences. Opportunities to develop and demonstrate educational leadership featured heavily in the initiatives established, including a one-year mentorship programme for new EF appointees. Another major focus of activity to support the EF pathway has been efforts to foster community and connectivity across this cohort (as described further in Box 13, Chapter 11.1).

8.3. **Pedagogical Merit model**

The *Pedagogical Merit* (or *Pedagogical Academy*) model is a distinctive system of reward for university teaching that operates in parallel to and independent of university's academic career pathways. It is designed to reward and empower academics who have had the most profound and sustained impact on the quality and culture of university teaching at their institution, regardless of their seniority or academic profile.

The model offers rewards both to the merited academic and their department/program:

- **at the individual level**, the merited academic – who is given the title of *Excellent Teaching Practitioner* or similar – typically receives a permanent salary increase equivalent to a promotion grade. Some institutions support two different 'levels' of merit, with a larger salary increase given to those that achieve merited status at the higher level.
- **at the community level**, the merited academic's department or programme benefits from additional support to strengthen university teaching and incentivise collegial cultures and practices. While the focus of this support differs between universities, many come with financial resources. For example, some universities redistribute the proportion of educational funding allocated to departments according to the number of merited academics they employ; others offer dedicated funding for merited teachers to advance an educational innovation project. What links all activities, however, is their focus on advancing community-wide collegial cultures and practices in university teaching.

Candidates apply for merited status via a reflective teaching portfolio that is assessed through external peer review. The assessment criteria typically call upon candidates to exhibit: (i) a scholarly educational approach that demonstrates clear development over time and focuses on the student learning process; and (ii) an inclusive approach to educational leadership that advances collegial educational cultures and practices across their department and/or programme.

While adoption of the *Pedagogical Merit* model to date has been largely confined to the Nordic region (as outlined in Section 11.2), interviewee feedback made clear that the ideas and practices underpinning this approach have had a much wider global influence. Interviewees repeatedly spoke about how explorations of the *Pedagogical Merit* model had precipitated far-reaching conversations about how collective cultures in university teaching could be encouraged and incentivised at their own institution. Several universities were noted as sources of particular inspiration. However, the model most consistently cited was based at Lund University, as outlined in Box 4. When making these recommendations, interviewees often suggested that they viewed the *Pedagogical Merit* model as a valuable "*stepping stone*" towards enabling more deep-rooted changes to institutional reward systems or academic career pathways, as seen at Lund University.

Interviewee feedback pointed to several **strengths** of the *Pedagogical Merit* model:

- it can enable a step-change in the ways that university teaching is rewarded without the need to redesign formal institutional processes such as academic career pathways;
- it offers an incentive – often a financial reward – for department or programme heads to encourage their academics to excel in university teaching and gain merited status;
- it helps to foster collegiality, encouraging academics who excel in university teaching to support, encourage and share educational ideas with their colleagues;
- it offers a mechanism for any academic to be merited – regardless of professional profile or seniority – including those with a research focus, helping to create a more inclusive and diverse university teaching community.

Interviewee feedback pointed to several **constraints or risks** of the *Pedagogical Merit* model:

- the model typically operates outside formal reward systems and could therefore be abandoned or side-lined by institutional leaders who do not support the approach;
- the model does not offer incentives for merited academics to continue to advance their pedagogical practice or collegial approaches after the receipt of the award;
- application to the Academy is voluntary, so academics can opt to not take part;
- the model calls for a considerable and ongoing financial commitment by the university;
- a risk exists of a divide emerging between merited and non-merited academics.

Box 4: **Pedagogical Academy, LTH, Lund University, Sweden**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **PEDAGOGICAL MERIT MODEL**

In 2001, the Faculty of Engineering (LTH) at Lund University devised and launched the *Pedagogical Academy*[15] as a mechanism to improve the culture and practice of university teaching across its academic community. At the time, most systems of reward for university teaching at the university – such as teaching awards or education-focused career pathways – focused on the individual: they benefitted only the awardee and rewarded their individual achievements. The *Pedagogical Academy* took a different approach, with a model that incentivised and rewarded excellence in university teaching for both the individual and their wider community. This dual focus was used to shape the selection criteria for the *Academy*: successful applicants combine individual excellence (demonstrating a scholarly, reflective and student-centred educational approach that shows clear development over time) with impact on their educational community (demonstrating their influence on the educational ideas, cultures, and practices of colleagues). The dual focus on the individual and community is also reflected in the *Academy's* system of reward, offering a combination of:

- **an individual reward:** successful applicants are awarded the title of *Excellent Teaching Practitioner* (ETP) and a permanent annual salary increase of approximately USD $2300;
- **a community reward:** the successful applicants' department is awarded a permanent increase in its annual educational budget of approximately USD $14,250 throughout the ETP's employment at LTH. So, the more ETPs it has, the greater the department's education budget.

Today, 120 LTH academics have been awarded ETP status (accounting for around 20% of LTH's academic community). One striking feature of this ETP community is its diversity – it brings together academics with a wide range of profiles and background, including many prominent research leaders. It is also notable that the proportion of ETPs in the LTH academic community increases with seniority, suggesting that ETP status is associated with more rapid career advancement in the Faculty – 30% of Department Heads and 60% of Faculty Managers are ETPs. Interviewee feedback suggests that this infusion of ETPs across all levels of the Faculty hierarchy – with particularly strong representation at the more senior levels – has helped to systematically raise the status of, and commitment to, university teaching in LTH. Student outcomes data points to significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning across the Faculty since the introduction of the *Pedagogical Academy*, as discussed further in Section 11.2.

In the years since the *Academy's* launch, several other Faculties at Lund University have adopted similar models. Building on this foundation, in April 2024, Lund University introduced a new institution-wide framework to support and reward continuous development in university teaching throughout academic careers. Unlike the *Pedagogical Academy*, this reform impacts all academics – across all Faculties – through the establishment of a new blended career pathway. The reform, based on a year-long review[48], will use the *Career Framework for University Teaching*[34] to standardise expectations for university teaching in career pathways, annual reviews, and educational development.

9. How to evaluate university teaching

The challenge faced:

Interviewees consistently identified the ways that university teaching is evaluated – particularly during academic appointments and promotions – as a long-standing barrier to improving the reward of university teaching. Feedback points to a widespread lack of trust across the academic community that existing evaluation systems will offer a robust and transparent evaluation of their impact and achievement in university teaching on which they can build their career advancement.

Interviewee feedback made clear that effective rewards rely on systems of evaluation for university teaching that are accessible, evidence-based and trusted by the academic community. Their feedback also suggested that establishing such systems poses a major challenge for universities worldwide. Indeed, even interviewees from front-runner universities recognised for their leadership in this domain, pointed to limitations in their own institution's evaluation systems.

Disaggregating the evaluation process into its core elements – *defining standards*, *evaluating impact*, and *assessing candidates* – can help to shed light on the functions and limitations of each element. This chapter therefore considers each of these elements in turn:

1. **how standards in university teaching are defined:** the expectations and frameworks used to benchmark achievement and progression in university teaching (Section 9.1);
2. **how impact and achievement are demonstrated:** the metrics and tools used by academics to evidence their impact and achievement in university teaching (Section 9.2);
3. **how universities assess candidates:** the ways that a candidate's impact and achievement in university teaching are assessed during appointment and promotion (Section 9.3).

Demonstrating impact and achievement in university teaching (element 2 above) has been a major focus of discussion and development worldwide, with some front-runner universities adopting aligned standards (element 1 above) to support these evaluation systems. In contrast, far fewer universities have reformed their methods for assessing candidates (element 3 above), despite this being widely seen as one of the key barriers to improving how university teaching is rewarded.

As discussed in Chapter 1, this report focuses on policies and activities implemented in practice at universities worldwide, as identified by their peers. Research ideas and publications are highlighted only if they were repeatedly cited by interviewees as key inspirations for these practices.

9.1. How standards in university teaching are defined

As noted in Chapter 5, many front-runners have adopted institution-wide standards for university teaching – across all functions and schools – to underpin processes such as performance reviews, professional development and promotions. Such consistent standards were noted to help align expectations in education and enable academics to better plan and track their career progression.

Some front-runner universities developed such standards in-house (such as the *Teaching Evaluation Standards*[28] at the University of Oregon), while others adopted and adapted global or national standards (such as the *Australian University Teaching Criteria and Standards*[49]). What these standards typically share, however, is a development process grounded in the scholarly literature – with work by *Ernest Boyer*[24], *Keith Trigwell*[50], *Paul Trowler*[51], and *Caroline Kreber*[52] frequently cited – and enriched

by feedback from the academic community. For example, Stockholm University's *Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching*[19] engaged experienced educators from across the university in a series of workshops to develop their well-regarded *8 Dimensions of Academic Teachership*[53]. These frameworks were noted to reflect the priorities and cultural norms of the communities from which they are drawn. For example, an educational development framework[54] currently under development at the University of Chile places particular emphasis on "*empathy and social relationships*", reflecting the priorities of the Latin American community it is designed to serve.

A review of the standards and frameworks for university teaching employed at front-runner universities suggested that most adopt one or more of the following broad models:

1. **benchmark standards for pedagogical practice:** these standards define 'competency' or 'excellence' in pedagogical practice and are built around key activities or competencies that academics must demonstrate to meet this benchmark. They often serve as rubrics for evaluating and developing pedagogical skills. Examples include Stockholm University's eight *Dimensions of Academic Teachership*[53] and the standards implemented at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) as part of its *Holistic Evaluation of Teaching*[55] (HET) initiative, which defines four *Dimensions of Excellent Teaching*[56]: (i) engages students; (ii) is equitable; (iii) is learning centred and responsive; and (iv) involves striving to improve.
2. **developmental standards for pedagogical practice:** these standards also identify a set of core activities or competencies that underpin effective pedagogical practice, but additionally incorporate a scale of 'mastery levels' for each dimension. For example, the *Assessment Matrix for Teaching Skills*[27] at the University of Helsinki identifies five mastery levels for each of six dimensions that include *pedagogical training and thinking* and *demonstration of teaching skills*. Another example is the standard developed by the *Transforming Higher Education Multidimensional Evaluation of Teaching* (TEval) consortium[57], as outlined in Box 5, which has been adopted across several US universities. Developmental standards often emphasise collegiality and collaboration as foundational elements of effective pedagogical practice, as apparent in the *Danish Framework for Advancing University Pedagogy*[18].
3. **career progression frameworks in university teaching:** these frameworks are specifically designed to structure and support progression in university teaching across all career stages, including to more senior levels where activities extend beyond direct 'student teaching'. Unlike the standards noted above, these frameworks are not structured around a fixed set of dimensions; instead, the dimensions are flexible and evolve with career advancement. Progression is typically framed around an academic's broadening 'sphere of influence' in university teaching, starting with impact on students and extending to their influence over departmental, institutional or national/global communities. Examples include the *U21 Teaching Standards Framework*[58] developed by *Universitas 21 (U21)*[59] and the *Career Framework for University Teaching*[34] as outlined in Box 6.

More than half of front-runners have adopted one or more of these models to guide institution-wide development and progression in university teaching. The themes of *collegiality*, *educational leadership*, and *career flexibility* have gained prominence in many of the standards and frameworks adopted in recent years. It should be noted, however that no two standards or frameworks are identical; each reflects the particular culture and priorities of the institution. Some are also adapted to reflect the distinctive priorities and practices of individual university departments. For example, each division at the University of Toronto develops its own tenure and promotion guidelines, based on a defined set of institutional standards[60]. Even universities that base their standards on national or global models, such as the Advance HE's *PSF*[32] or the U21's *Teaching Standards Framework*[58], have customised these rubrics to align with their institutional context.

Box 5: **TEval, US**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **DEVELOPMENTAL STANDARDS FOR PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICE**

TEval is a consortium of US universities with a mission to improve the ways that 'faculty teaching practices' are reviewed, documented and evaluated. Their work builds on the *Benchmarks for Teaching Effectiveness*[61], evidence-based standards developed by the University of Kansas[62] that articulate seven dimensions of effective teaching, as illustrated below. These dimensions are assessed across three mastery levels. The benchmarks were developed to support a range of institutional processes, including annual performance reviews and promotion, and have been adopted by several US universities including those working within the TEval consortium (such as at University of Massachusetts, Amherst[63]) as well as outside this group (such as at Worcester Polytechnic Institute[64]).

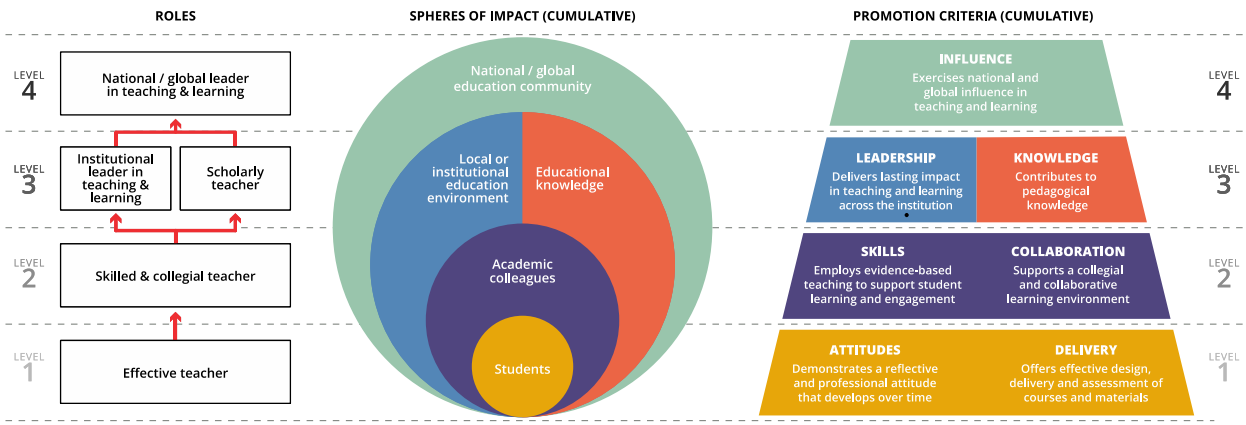
Box 6: **Career Framework for University Teaching, Advancing Teaching coalition**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **CAREER PROGRESSION FRAMEWORKS IN UNIVERSITY TEACHING**

The *Career Framework for University Teaching*[34] was launched in 2018 to offer a structured pathway for progression on the basis of impact in university teaching for all 'teaching-active' academics, regardless of their focus and role. The framework was co-developed[65] through the *Advancing Teaching*[2] coalition and refined through piloting at 15 universities worldwide to ensure its applicability across institutional contexts, disciplines and processes such as promotion and annual performance review.

The framework is structured across four progressive levels of impact in university teaching, with the first – the *Effective Teacher* – representing the threshold level to which all academics should attain. Progression is marked by the academic's expanding 'sphere of impact', which broadens beyond the students they teach and tutor to encompass progressively wider communities. Beyond level 3, academics may determine the relative weight to be placed on their impact on: (i) the environment for teaching and learning within and beyond their institution; and/or (ii) pedagogical scholarship.

While offering a unified set of standards, the framework is designed as an open-source tool adaptable to a range of contexts. It has been used, for example, to guide the design of academic career pathways (such as at UNSW[5]), national funding schemes that support educational innovation (such as for the Dutch *Comenius Programme*[66]), and professional development pathways (such as at Utrecht University[67]).



9.2. **How impact and achievement are demonstrated**

The ways in which academics can demonstrate their impact and achievement in university teaching – and how this is evidenced in cases for appointment or promotion – has been a major focus of global discussion and development. Many front-runner institutions have fundamentally redesigned their evaluation systems, often in conjunction with new institution-wide standards in university teaching. Such changes are evident across the global sector. In particular, while US universities were less likely to be cited as front-runners overall, interviewees often recognised them as pioneers in rethinking how university teaching is evaluated in key institutional processes. Much of this work stems from concerns about an over-reliance on 'student satisfaction surveys' as primary evidence sources and doubts about their validity in providing unbiased and robust assessments of academics' impact and achievement. Reforms activities have often focused in two key areas, as explored below.

The **first area** is redesigning student surveys to focus on capturing students' feedback rather than their assessment of 'teaching quality'. Many of the new surveys most often cited by interviewees shared several common features. They were often developed through broad consultation with both students and academics (such as the *Student Experience of Instruction*[68] survey at UBC) and/or aligned with institutional standards for university teaching (such as at the University of Oregon, as outlined in Box 7). Notably, some surveys cited by interviewees for their quality of approach – such as the *HowULearn*[69] survey at the University of Helsinki – are designed as developmental tools to improve the student learning experience rather than for summative evaluations of academics' teaching.

The **second area** is diversifying the types of evidence used to demonstrate impact and achievement in university teaching, moving beyond reliance on student surveys. Front-runners are increasingly incorporating broader evidence, such as summative peer review, in performance review and promotion processes. For example, peer observation is becoming a required component of tenure and promotion at universities such as Harvard University[70] and University of Southern California[71]. Alongside these 'core' indicators, academics are often encouraged to gather wider evidence that reflects their distinct interests, activities, and impact in university teaching. Recognising that this can be daunting, many front-runners are investing in targeted support to help academics:

1. **to identify evidence** that best demonstrates their interests, activities, and impact in university teaching. Some universities offer rubrics that categorise different types of evidence and guide academics to select the most suitable options for them. These rubrics are often aligned with standards for university teaching and offer different discipline- and practice-specific case studies for how evidence might be collected, such as the *Forms of Evidence*[72] embedded in the *Career Framework for University Teaching*[34]. Many such rubrics categorise evidence by its source or stakeholder group. So, for example, the *Tools for Evaluation*[73], developed by TEval, are structured around the three key stakeholder groups from which evidence can be sourced: *instructors*; *peers*; and *students.*
2. **to present this evidence** in a way that best helps them to build a coherent narrative about their distinctive interests, activities, and impact in university teaching. Many front-runners are asking academics to maintain a 'teaching portfolio' and are offering dedicated guidance on how to structure and develop it. For example, Aarhus University recently introduced a teaching portfolio[74], aligned with the *Danish Framework for Advancing University Pedagogy*[18], that serves as a central resource for annual performance review, professional development and promotions. Interview feedback also suggested that many universities have drawn inspiration from researchers behind the development[30] and evaluation[31] of the *Pedagogical Academies* in Sweden, whose work helped to shape teaching portfolio design.

Box 7: **Teaching Evaluation Standards, University of Oregon, US**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **REDESIGN OF STUDENT SURVEYS**

In 2017, the University of Oregon launched a major initiative[75] to reform how it evaluates 'teaching excellence', responding to concerns about the transparency and impartiality of existing evaluation systems. Evolving adaptively over time, the reform focused on two priority areas:

The first priority was to devise and adopt university-wide standards for 'teaching excellence' to inform teaching evaluations. Building on feedback from the academic community and a review of alternative approaches, these *Teaching Evaluation Standards*[76] are structured around four criteria:

1. ***professional teaching,*** with criteria covering: the quality and organisation of course materials; the design of student learning activities; and respectful/timely communication with students.
2. ***inclusive teaching,*** with criteria including: instruction that values and enables full participation of all students; and course content that reflects diversity and different lived experiences.
3. ***engaged teaching,*** with criteria including "*demonstrated reflective teaching practice, including through the regular revision of courses in content and pedagogy*".
4. ***research-Informed teaching,*** with criteria including: feedback that is useful, timely and supports progress; and evaluation that is clearly linked to students' learning goals.

The second priority was to establish new tools[77] that could demonstrate whether the standards had been met. These tools triangulate evidence from three sources:

- ***evidence from self:*** academics are encouraged to engage in guided self-reflection on their educational approach and pathways for development using the *Instructor Reflection* survey[78], which maps to each of the *Teaching Evaluation Standards.*
- ***evidence from students:*** the university developed the *Student Experience Survey*[79] to gather student feedback on 13 'teaching elements', each linked to one of the *Teaching Evaluation Standards*. For example, in the first section of the survey, students respond to prompts such as "*The inclusiveness of this course…*" on a simple three-point scale: "*is beneficial to my learning*"; "*is neutral*"; or "*needs improvement to help my learning*".
- ***evidence from peers:*** the university created a *Peer Review Template*[80] to scaffold peer observation of teaching using a written assessment structured around the *Teaching Evaluation Standards*.

These standards and evaluation systems are integrated across all processes and disciplines at the university, including new academic on-boarding, educational development courses, annual review, and academic promotion. It also extends to quality management and review at disciplinary and institutional levels. For example, a recent university review of how students' perceive *inclusiveness*[81] was based on evidence from the *Student Experience Survey* that aligned with the 'inclusive teaching' standard.

9.3. How universities assess candidates

The effective reward of university teaching also rests on the capacity of universities to conduct robust, transparent, and consistent assessments of candidates' achievements during appointment, promotion, and other reward processes. Interviewees noted that, unless the candidate is exclusively education-focused, such assessments are typically built on the judgement of two groups:

1. **external referees** who are typically disciplinary research experts with limited pedagogical expertise or familiarity with the candidate beyond their research profile and output;
2. **internal 'promotion' committees** primarily comprising senior academics who had advanced to the highest levels of the university career ladder based on their research leadership and output.

The capacity of either of these groups to offer a reliable and informed assessment of a candidate's impact and achievement in university teaching was noted by many to be "*quite limited*". In the words of one interviewee, "*the whole system is built around research… you've got all this expertise to assess research, but on the teaching side you've got practically nothing, you're shooting in the dark*". While many institutions have reconsidered how they define and evaluate university teaching in recent decades, interviewee feedback suggests that the methods used to assess candidates, as well as the individuals responsible for making these assessments, have often remained unchanged. Some went further and cited this issue as the single greatest barrier to improving the reward and recognition of university teaching. Despite these challenges, several promising interventions were highlighted, designed to transform *external peer review* and *internal promotion committees*, as discussed below.

Interviewee feedback highlighted the crucial role of **external peer review** in providing independent, evidence-based assessments of a candidate's impact in university teaching against an agreed set of standards. Assessments may include a candidate interview or in-class observations. However, most of the examples cited by interviewees are based on assessments of candidate's written submissions and/or their 'teaching portfolio', mirroring the peer review of academic research. Notably, several front-runners embed external peer review of university teaching in their assessment of candidates for appointment and/or promotion. For example, NUS in Singapore uses an external review panel to assess candidates on its educational-focused pathway, as outlined in Box 8, and Chalmers University of Technology in Sweden engages at least one external 'pedagogical expert' to review the candidate's teaching portfolio during all academic appointments and promotions[82].

A major constraint on the widespread use of external reviews, however, is the challenges universities face in accessing a sufficiently large pool of independent reviewers with the expertise and willingness to provide such expert assessments. In response, a growing number of initiatives worldwide are working to create expert communities of independent assessors. Some universities, such as at NTNU in Norway[83], have launched internal training programmes to prepare academics for peer review within the institution. Other initiatives focus on building cross-institutional or national networks of reviewers to assess candidates outside their own institution. One highly-regarded example is a national course in Sweden[36] that trains academics to serve as external pedagogical reviewers for appointments, promotions and entry to Pedagogical Academies at universities across the country. Over the past 15 years, this national training programme has helped to build a national community of reviewers across Sweden, qualified to assess 'pedagogical skills' as articulated in candidate's 'pedagogical portfolio'.

Interviewee feedback also suggested that the composition and expertise-base of **internal promotion committees** – and their capacity to provide informed and consistent assessments of a candidate's impact in university teaching – were also crucial to ensuring robust and fair reward systems. Most went on to note, however, that such institutional committees often proved difficult to change. Nonetheless, several interventions to address these challenges were highlighted. Some focused on adjusting the composition of the committee, including a pilot programme currently under review at TU/e, as outlined in Box 9. Other strategies have focused on building the capacity of existing committees to assess impact and achievement in university teaching. In many cases, interviewees with knowledge of these activities did not wish their institution to be identified in the report. The strategies they adopted, however, often included engaging committee members in workshop exercises where they must advocate for the promotion of academics with different profiles. This approach encourages committee members to step into the candidate's shoes, to consider how they might demonstrate impact in university teaching. It was also noted to help committee members to appreciate why an education-focused case for promotion may differ in structure and evidence from the research-focused cases with which they may be more familiar.

Box 8: **External Review Panel, Educator Track, NUS, Singapore**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **EXTERNAL PEER REVIEW**

NUS supports four parallel academic career tracks: a *Tenure Track*, a *Practice Track*, a *Clinician Track* and an *Educator Track*. The *Educator Track* was launched in 2015 in response to concerns that the previous 'teaching track' was not underpinned by well-defined promotion criteria or metrics to demonstrate the candidate's achievements in teaching and learning. The new *Educator Track* established a clearly articulated set of progression criteria (framed around the candidate's 'sphere of influence' as defined in the *Career Framework for University Teaching*[34]) along with guidance on the types of evidence that could be used to demonstrate this impact (framed around the four evidence domains proposed by Denise Chalmers[84]: *self-assessment*, *peer assessment*, *student input*, and *student achievement*). In 2017, NUS also established an *External Review Panel* (ERP) to contribute to the 'peer assessment' evidence domain for candidates for appointment or promotion on the *Educator Track*.

For appointments and promotions on the NUS *Tenure Track*, the peer review process includes assessments from six external referees who provide an independent expert evaluation of the candidate's profile and impact within their research field. The ERP was established to offer an equivalent independent external evaluation for appointment and promotion on the *Educator Track*. The panel comprises a rotating group of four or five hand-picked global thought-leaders in teaching and learning, selected from peer research-intensive universities worldwide. The panel convenes annually to review *Educator Track* candidates and to benchmark their impact on university teaching.

The ERP meets on site at NUS over a two-week period and is informed by three sources of evidence:

- a review of the candidate's application, covering a teaching statement and impact narrative;
- an observation of a teaching session led by the candidate;
- a face-to-face interview with the candidate.

Drawing on these three sources, the panel is asked to look for evidence of the candidate's impact in two domains. The first is evidence of student learning, which has been collected by the candidate and systematically shared with colleagues at NUS. The second is evidence of educational leadership, showcasing the candidate's influence not only on the students they teach but also on their academic peers and the broader institutional environment for educational excellence. Based on the evidence collected, the ERP is asked to compile a 'consensus report' that provides an independent assessment of the candidate for the consideration of the subsequent NUS promotion committees.

Box 9: **TU/e, Netherlands**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **ALIGNING APPOINTMENT AND PROMOTION COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP WITH CANDIDATE PROFILE**

In 2023, TU/e introduced a unified, 'blended' academic career pathway[38] structured across four domains: *research*; *education*; *impact*; and *leadership & team*. Academics must contribute to all areas, but can assign varying weights to each domain based on their interests and areas of impact, with greater flexibility afforded as they progress in their careers. Academics define their unique profile through a biographical sketch[85], which they embed in their case for appointment or promotion.

To ensure appointment and promotion committees offer transparent, robust and consistent assessments of candidates across these varying profiles, TU/e launched a pilot to align the expertise of the committee with the candidate's profile. The proposal is to appoint three 'core' members to the committee for each discipline to ensure consistency across all appointment/promotion decisions. Additional internal and external committee members are then selected to reflect the profile and specialisms of the candidate. So, for example, if the candidate places a 60% emphasis on university teaching, the composition of their assessment committee (and the expertise each member brings) is selected accordingly. The *Department of Electrical Engineering* at TU/e is currently conducting a pilot of this approach.

10. How to build effective support systems

The challenge faced:

Interviewee feedback suggested that the effective reward of university teaching relies on robust institutional systems that guide and support academics' continuous educational development. A range of barriers to delivering such systems were identified. These included: the lack of time available in academic workloads to devote to educational development; the difficulty of engaging academics in ongoing development beyond mandatory training; the challenge of harmonising standards and practices across institutions; and the challenge of fostering educational leadership. Interviewees also highlighted the fragmented nature of educational development programmes, which are often disconnected from broader institutional systems and departmental practices.

This chapter outlines policies and practices adopted at front-runner universities that address the challenges that stand in the way of building effective institutional support systems. It focuses on:

1. how to safeguard time for educational development;
2. how to harmonise institutional practices;
3. how to promote continuous educational development;
4. how to foster educational leadership.

Please note: at the majority of front-runner universities, the activities described in this chapter are delivered in addition to compulsory pedagogical training courses or qualifications for all academics.

10.1. How to safeguard time for educational development

Interviewee feedback suggested that a key barrier to career progression in university teaching is the limited time available for academics to devote to educational activities beyond their assigned 'teaching workload'. They noted that academics often struggle to find time to engage in university teaching activities likely to enhance their careers – such as educational innovation, professional development and educational leadership – or to conduct evaluations that demonstrate their impact in university teaching. These challenges were noted to be particularly acute for academics on education-focused contracts, which often come with high 'teaching workloads'.

Interviewees at front-runner universities clearly recognised this challenge. Their feedback suggested that two strategies – used separately or in combination – are often employed to address it.

The **first strategy** involves explicitly allocating time within academic employment contracts for professional development, innovation, and leadership in university teaching. So, for example, academics at the University of Amsterdam may devote up to 20% of their time to university teaching-related activities that extend beyond their regular teaching commitments, pending agreement with line managers. Front-runners are increasingly exploring this model for education-focused roles. For example, following a recent Enterprise Agreement[45], the University of Sydney now caps the teaching workload allocation for its education-focused academics[44] at 70% to protect time for educational development, pedagogical innovation, SoTL, other research, and educational leadership. These education-focused academics have the opportunity to apply for internal funding to support their educational research.

The **second strategy** involves schemes that allow academics to 'buy-out' a significant portion of their time (over a fixed period) to lead and deliver a major educational initiative. These projects are typically chosen by the academics but are often aligned with the university's strategic teaching and learning priorities. The projects undertaken as part of these schemes range from *improving students' sense of belonging at the university* to *designing new programme curricula*. Interviewees consistently identified three 'best practice' examples of such schemes:

- ***Teaching Fellowships* at Stellenbosch University[21]:** this scheme provides funding for senior academics with a proven track record in SoTL to undertake projects that elevate the status of teaching and learning at the university. The funding can be used at the recipient's discretion, including for 'buying out' up to 50% of their time for one to three years.
- ***Education Incentive Fund* at Utrecht University[86]**: this fund awards €2 million annually for educational innovation and development projects proposed by academics, with the option to cover academics' time for the project duration. Additionally, the fund helps academics to demonstrate "*grant-earning capacity*", which can support their case for promotion. Proposed projects must align with the university's strategic plan[87] or with key strategic themes identified by Utrecht University each year.
- ***Pedagogical Ambassador* project at Stockholm University[20]**: academics are nominated by department heads to lead a one-year pedagogical development project of strategic importance to the department, with a 20-25% 'buy-out' of their time. In addition to leading these projects, Ambassadors promote a scholarly and collegial educational culture within their department by promoting educational discussions and building links with the university's *Centre for the Advancement of University Teaching*[19].

It is interesting to note that national governments are increasingly recognising the importance of creating opportunities for academics to focus on educational innovations. For example, the French government recently launched a national scheme[88] that offers academics "*leave for an educational project*", as a counterpart to their long-standing scheme[89] that offers academics "*leave for research*".

10.2. How to harmonise institutional practices

A challenge discussed at length by interviewees was the lack of coherence across different university processes for evaluating, supporting and rewarding university teaching. This included a misalignment in the progression criteria for university teaching used in different institutional processes (such as appointments, professional development, annual performance review, and promotions) as well as inconsistencies in how they are applied across department and schools. As a result, academics often struggle to identify which educational activities will advance their careers or to trust that their university will appropriately recognise and reward these contributions in practice.

Front-runner universities have adopted various strategies to address this challenge, many of which focus on cultivating cross-institutional connectivity, dialogue and communities of practice (as noted in Chapter 11). A striking number of front-runners, however, are also tackling this issue through co-designing common standards in university teaching which can be applied across processes and disciplines. These standards are often flexible. For example, those developed at the University of Toronto are designed to be adapted by departments and disciplines[60]. However, such standards – along with the cross-institutional discussions that shaped their development – can help to build more consistent progression criteria and practices for evaluating, supporting and rewarding university teaching across the university. A particularly interesting example are the standards developed in Denmark – as outlined in Box 10 – which have been used to harmonise evaluation, development and recognition practices within and between universities across the country.

Box 10: **Danish Framework for Advancing University Pedagogy**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **THE USE OF COMMON STANDARDS TO HARMONISE SUPPORT AND REWARD PRACTICES**

National government policy requires all Danish academics to be employed on the same career track that embeds an equal focus on research and university teaching. Over the past decade, a growing number of Danish universities have started to embed an expectation that all academics should improve their competencies and impact in university teaching as they progress through this unified career ladder. In 2020, these ambitions were formalised through government legislation[90] that called for all Danish academics – regardless of role or grade – to progressively improve their 'pedagogical competence' throughout their career and maintain a teaching portfolio that is integrated into appointment/promotion processes and reviewed annually by line managers.

In response to these national requirements, all eight Danish universities came together to co-design a shared national framework establishing common standards and criteria for progression in university teaching. Launched in 2021, this *Danish Framework for Advancing University Pedagogy*[18] is framed around four levels of achievement with six competencies defined at each level. Three of these competencies relate to the 'operational space' (focused on the individual and their educational practice) and three relate to the 'collegial space' (focused on the academic's contribution to collective educational cultures, practices and communities). The framework is designed as a flexible tool to inform and build on existing systems of support and development at each Danish university.

Since its launch, universities across Denmark have used the framework to reshape and harmonise key institutional processes around these shared standards, including changes to:

- **appointment and promotion criteria:** many universities now use the framework to set minimum achievement levels in university teaching for appointment to each stage of the career ladder. For example, Copenhagen Business School (CBS) requires Associate Professors to meet all Level 2 competencies of the framework and Full Professors to meet all competencies at Level 3 and some at Level 4. Some universities, such as Aalborg University[91], also use the framework to guide annual salary negotiations.
- **teaching portfolio design:** most universities have revised their teaching portfolios to align with the framework, with impact outside the classroom through contributions to collegiality and collective practices often becoming a much more prominent theme in these documents. Examples include the new portfolio developed by Aarhus University[74]. In some universities, the redesigned portfolio serves as a pivotal resource and evidence-base in key institutional processes, both formative (such as annual performance reviews and educational development) and summative (such as academic appointments and promotions).
- **educational development:** several Danish universities have aligned their educational development programmes to the framework to provide academics with a clear structure for the course offerings. This process has also been used to identify gaps in provision. Through such a process, for example, Aarhus University identified the 'collegial community' standard at Level 3 of the framework as a key gap in its educational development provision and has since introduced a targeted educational leadership[92] course. In addition, several Danish universities are exploring the potential for co-delivering courses targeting higher framework levels that may not be feasible for a single university to deliver independently.

In addition to these institutional changes, the national framework was noted to have established a shared language and standards for defining achievements in university teaching. This, in turn, is expected to enhance academic mobility and pave the way for greater cross-institutional collaboration in educational development courses. The challenge now lies in raising awareness of the framework across the academic community and building engagement with the new systems and processes that it has informed.

10.3. How to promote continuous educational development

A challenge repeatedly discussed by interviewees is how to encourage academics to engage in ongoing, educational development at every stage of their careers. Interviewees noted that academics often view educational development as a discrete threshold to be met in order to comply with mandatory pedagogical training or promotion criteria, rather than a continuous process to enhance their competencies and impact in university teaching throughout their careers.

A small but increasing number of front-runner universities require all teaching-active academics to undertake a threshold level of continuous educational development. For example, Maastricht University requires academics to spend at least 16 hours per year on '*professional development in the field of education*'[93] and the Danish government recently mandated[90] that all academics "*with teaching obligations must continuously maintain and develop their acquired pedagogical didactic competencies*".

In addition to these formal requirements, interviewees highlighted various strategies employed by front-runner institutions to foster voluntary engagement in continuous educational development. Three key approaches were frequently noted:

- **clear development pathways:** providing an accessible, well-structured map of the educational development courses and activities available to enable academics to easily assess their current stage of development as well as identify opportunities for further development. A frequently-cited example is the interactive pdf[94] offered by Utrecht University that lays out the '*teacher development options*' available at the university in a single page, including courses advancing *continuous development* (focused on key teaching competencies and pedagogies) and *career-oriented development* (mapped against career advancement milestones).
- **easy access and 'bite-sized' opportunities:** offering low-barrier-to-entry courses and activities with short, fixed durations, clear goals that target common 'teaching challenges'. These courses are often designed to deliver practical outcomes that can be immediately applied in the classroom. For example, Erasmus University Rotterdam's *MicroLabs*[95] offer flexible, two-to-four-hour courses on topics such as '*how to use AI as a teacher*', combining online learning with face-to-face small-group workshops focused on applying ideas in practice.
- **supporting individual interest and specialisms:** emphasising that educational development need not follow a single, linear path, but can be tailored to academics' personal interests and specialisms in university teaching. Institutions such as Aarhus University and VU were noted for their bespoke, individualised educational development opportunities, supported by one-to-one coaching and mentorship. Further details of the VU approach is given in Box 11.

Another barrier to continuous educational development, as highlighted by interviewees, is the limited attention given to university teaching during annual performance reviews. They suggested that these discussions were often brief and focused on meeting threshold targets, such as 'teaching workload' allocations or student survey 'scores', rather than on academics' plans for professional growth in education. Some went on to suggest that line managers leading such reviews often lack the expertise or incentive to engage more deeply with academics on their educational development.

In response, a growing number of front-runners have introduced structured conversation guides to enhance performance review discussions. Dutch universities have recently developed such guides, such as the *Career Compass*[96] at Maastricht University. Similarly, Danish universities, such as Aalborg University, are leveraging the new national framework to guide educational discussions during annual reviews. At CBS, department heads played a key role in designing updated performance review protocols that better integrate academics' teaching portfolios and development frameworks.

Box 11: **Continuous Development Path, VU, The Netherlands**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **CONTINUOUS EDUCATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

In partnership with universities across the Netherlands, VU is driving far reaching change in its systems of reward and recognition[97]. These changes have seen the launch of a new blended academic career track[98] that supports a diverse range of academic profiles and pathways. This blended track calls on all academics to meet a threshold level of achievement in *Teaching*, *Research* and *Impact*, while also pursuing a specialised emphasis in any one of these three domains.

Academic diversity and flexibility also feature prominently in the *Continuous Development Path*[99] (CDP), the distinctive educational development approach offered by VU's *Centre for Teaching & Learning* (CTL) for all academics, regardless of their profile. Two features set the *Continuous Development Path* apart. Firstly, it enables academics to follow diverse pathways in their educational development and training, allowing them to identify and build their own distinctive identities and specialisms as educators. Secondly, it offers a visual map of the opportunities available – provided online as an interactive guide[99] – to help each academic plan, track, and review their own personalised development.

As shown in Figure 5, the *Continuous Development Path* map has a honeycomb structure that illustrates the connections and dependencies between the various educational development activities available to VU academics. The three major educational qualifications offered at VU – *Undergraduate Teaching Qualification* (*UTQ*), *Senior Teaching Qualification* (*STQ*) and *Educational Leadership Course* – form a horizontal seam through the hexagonal cells; each qualification represents a crucial milestone for progression to the major career steps in the academic ladder up to full professorship. The *Continuous Development Path* map's colour palette also offers a visual guide of the opportunities that open up on completion of each qualification. For example, the hexagons shown in purple are dependent on completion of the STQ.

While all academics start their journey with the *Start to Teach Day* and *UTQ*, the subsequent pathways taken will be driven by their personal priorities, interests and responsibilities. To help academics plan their development, the CTL has suggested several 'example development paths' that could be used to build specialised profiles such as *Assessment Specialist*, *Educational Designer*, and *Educational Leader*. Illustrated in Figure 5 is the development pathway suggested for an *Educational Leader*. One-to-one coaching is used extensively to both guide the development path selected/designed by each academic and to support their learning within each course/activity on their chosen pathway.

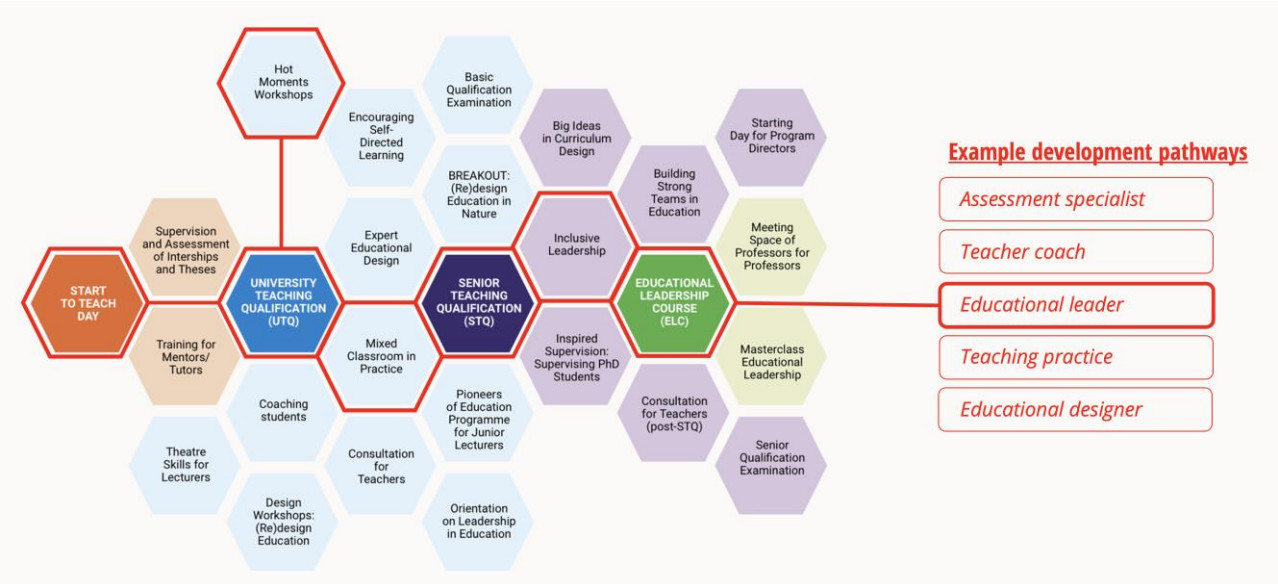


Figure 5. VU CTL's Continuous Development Path map, with example path for an Educational Leader shown in red

10.4. How to foster educational leadership

As reflected throughout this report, fostering educational leadership was a major focus of interviewee feedback. Many noted that, as universities develop new progression routes in university teaching (for example, via education-focused and blended career tracks), there have been growing calls to both establish clear definitions for 'educational leadership' and provide structured support for developing such competencies. Interviewees consistently identified routes to foster and build upon educational leadership as key 'missing pieces' in educational development programmes worldwide. The need for such programmes was noted to be exacerbated by the shortage of role models in senior educational positions who could serve as champions and mentors.

In addition to other initiatives that champion and foster educational leadership – such as an *Educational Leadership Chair*[100] at the University of Windsor, Canada – an increasing number of front-runner universities now offer formal programmes in this area. While practices vary, the definition for educational leadership adopted by most aligns with that proposed at UBC, as activities that "*advance innovation in teaching and learning with impact beyond one's classroom*"[26]. Two universities were repeatedly highlighted by interviewees for the quality of their educational leadership provision; as noted in Chapter 11.2, the approaches they adopt appear to have influenced practices worldwide:

- **Utrecht University:** the university was recognised for two programmes in particular: (i) the *Educational Leadership Programme*[101], aimed at academics in managerial educational roles with no line management responsibilities; and (ii) *Senior Fellow Programme*[12], aimed at fostering institutional and global educational leaders, as outlined in Box 12.
- **UBC:** as part of the university's wider investment in fostering educational leadership[26], interviewees highlighted the *Scholarship of Educational Leadership course*[47] at UBC as an important source of inspiration in the development of educational leadership programmes elsewhere, such as at Stellenbosch University[102].

In such programmes, learning is often centred around a major strategic educational change project that participants select and drive forward step-by-step, collaborating with and learning from others in the group. With relatively small numbers of academics participating each year, interviewees also noted a growing trend toward offering joint cross-institutional educational leadership programmes, with a wide range of examples including those from national[103] and transnational[104] consortia.

Box 12: Senior Fellows Programme, Utrecht University, Netherlands

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP PROGRAMMES**

Established in 2017, the *Senior Fellow Programme*[12] was designed to promote scholarly approaches to university teaching at Utrecht University and foster a new pathways to the most senior academic roles through educational leadership. As noted in the university's map[94] of its '*teacher development offer*', the programme targets educational leadership at the institutional and global levels.

All academics accepted onto this three-to-five year programme will be nominated for a full professorship upon it successful completion. They dedicate around two days per week to the fellowship throughout the programme: one day is devoted to personal development and activities to support the university's *Centre for Academic Teaching and Learning*[11]; one day is dedicated to a major strategic project focused on institutional curriculum or policy development. Fellows have a budget of €10,000 to spend on their educational development and/or their project and its dissemination. Fellows are encouraged to collaborate with and learn from one another throughout the programme. They are also asked to play an active role in championing university teaching across the university.

11. How to drive and support sustainable change

The challenge faced:

Interviewees highlighted several barriers to improving the reward of university teaching in practice. Cultural resistance was a recurring theme, often driven by concerns that such changes might constrain academic careers or undermine institutional research profiles. Interviewees pointed, too, to the long implementation periods required to shift cultures and systems, and the difficulty of sustaining momentum during these periods. The challenge of leadership transitions was also noted, where incoming leaders may lack the vision or commitment of their predecessors to driving through the systemic changes needed to elevate the status and reward of university teaching. These challenges all point to the importance of mechanisms to embed, drive and support change.

This chapter explores the strategies developed at front-runner universities to address the cultural and structural barriers to improving how university teaching is rewarded in academic careers. No single university, however, offers a definitive solution. Interview feedback from this group of leading universities made clear that "*no one has got this right*". Driving and supporting sustainable change was recognised to be 'work in progress' that requires sustained engagement across the institution.

Nonetheless, success at the front-runner universities was associated with:

1. establishing a culture that values university teaching (as explored in Chapter 11.1);
2. fostering beneficial cross-institutional partnerships (as explored in Chapter 11.2);
3. tracking the impacts of change (as explored in Chapter 11.3).

While this chapter examines broader strategies for addressing cultural and structural barriers to rewarding university teaching, it does not detail the specific steps universities take to design and implement reform. These approaches were the focus of a previous *Advancing Teaching* study – the *Roadmap for Change*[105] – which offers a step-by-step guide for planning and implementing such reforms, based on insights from universities that have implemented similar changes.

11.1. Establishing a culture that values university teaching

Interviewees spoke at length about how front-runner universities have nurtured institutional cultures that value and champion university teaching. Developed through sustained efforts over many years, these cultures progressively elevated the status of education within the institution, and were seen as the essential foundation for improving the reward of university teaching. This section explores the approaches at the front-runners seen to have successfully fostered such cultures.

Overall, feedback suggests that the culture-building strategies developed at front-runner universities share one or more of the following three features.

The first feature is the use of 'opt-in' activities. Many front-runner universities first introduce initiatives to improve the quality and/or the reward of university teaching on a voluntary basis. Academics are not compelled to take part, but are incentivised to do so. For example, participation in *Pedagogical Merit* programmes (described in Chapter 8.3) is voluntary: academics who opt in must meet a higher standard for 'pedagogical competence' than their peers, but typically receive an annual salary increase. Similarly, only academics who join the *Warwick International Higher Education Academy*[106] at Warwick University can bid for a suite of funds[107] to support educational innovation

activities. Many voluntary schemes at front-runner universities also offer incentives to department heads. For example, academics' participation in voluntary schemes such as the LTH *Pedagogical Academy*[15] and the *Pedagogical Ambassador* programme[20] at Stockholm University offers direct benefits to the participant's department through targeted investments in educational funding and projects specifically designed to further their educational priorities.

Some front-runners also apply the 'opt-in' principle to career advancement. For example, in 2016, the University of California, Irvine revised its criteria for accelerated promotion. While the standard promotion route requires candidates to demonstrate outstanding performance in *research* only, the accelerated route additionally requires evidence of exceptional performance in either *teaching* or *service*[108]. This accelerated route is explicitly designed to incentivise academics to excel in university teaching and/or service.

The second feature is an emphasis on individualisation and one-to-one support. Front-runner institutions do not take a one-size-fits-all approach to supporting university teaching. Instead, most promote individualised systems. These systems respond to the activities, interests and priorities of individual schools, programmes, and – through tailored one-to-one educational development and mentorship – academics. For example, since 2021, UCLA's *Teaching & Learning Center*[109] has collaborated one-to-one with departments to develop tailored versions of its *Holistic Evaluation of Teaching*[55] framework to ensure that each is adapted to the distinctive cultures, priorities, and disciplinary contexts of the department it serves. Similarly, the University of Toronto's standards for university teaching are designed to be flexible and responsive to the priorities of individual schools, programmes, and academics[60]. The university's student course evaluation survey also uses a cascaded framework, enabling divisions, units, and academics to select specific survey questions from a bank of validated options[110] that reflect their educational priorities. These evaluations therefore include student feedback that aligns with the distinct vision and priorities of those responsible for developing and reviewing the student learning experience at each institutional level. At the same time, the *Centre for Teaching Support & Innovation*[111] at the University of Toronto provides one-to-one support[112] for activities such as course design, developing and interpreting course evaluations, undertaking educational research, and building 'teaching dossiers'[113]. Tailored advice is also provided to promotion committees to support divisional activities such as interpreting course evaluations and evaluating broader contributions to university teaching.

The third feature is a focus on community-building. Almost all front-runners emphasise collegiality, network-building and peer support in university teaching. Some activities explicitly focus on establishing networks, such as communities of support (such as those described in Box 13 at UNSW) and peer mentoring programmes (such as the *Peer-to-Peer Faculty Mentoring for Teaching*[114] programme at the University of Toronto). Other approaches work indirectly to embed educational collegiality into university systems and practices. For example, the *Centre for University Teaching and Learning*[115] at the University of Helsinki anchors its educational development activities in a *Theory of Change*[116] in which '*networked and collaborative pedagogical development*' is a key pillar. Academics accepted into the university's *Teachers' Academy*[117] receive two-to-three years of educational funding for both themselves and their division, with their 'closest community' collectively deciding how the division's portion of the funding is spent. Similarly, collegiality is a major priority at the *Division for Higher Education Development*[118] at Lund University, which works to foster evidence-led discussions in university teaching across its academic community. In this example, all educational development courses require participants to write an evidence-led report on how their teaching practice could be improved, with feedback invited from a 'critical friend' in their department to provide constructive peer review. This approach was noted to help foster community dialogue around educational ideas and proposals for change while also helping to implement these changes in practice.

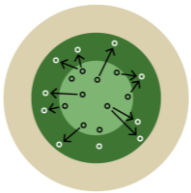
Box 13: **University of New South Wales (UNSW Sydney), Australia**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **BUILDING EDUCATIONAL COMMUNITIES**

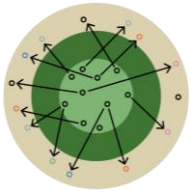
The launch of the education-focused (EF) career pathway at UNSW Sydney in 2017 (see Box 3) prompted a major focus on fostering connectivity and professional identity amongst this new academic community. While the EF community now represents almost a quarter of the university's academic population, its members are scattered across disciplines and lack the easy access to established internal networks and external resources available to their research-focused colleagues. At the same time, the *Office for Learning and Teaching* – the national agency that had played a pivotal role in building the quality of Australian university education – ceased operations in 2016, leaving a major void in educational grant funding and network-building opportunities across the country.

Establishing a collegial community across the EF community – building the culture, visibility and connectivity of this cohort – was therefore a particular priority. Such community-building enabled identity formation and collaboration across of the EF cohort. It also opened up avenues to expand their sphere of educational impact and advance their career progression. Since 2017, UNSW has worked to build the EF community at three progressive levels:

connectivity within the EF community. In the early years after the pathway's launch, attention focused on building connectivity within the new cross-disciplinary EF community, as supported by regular networking events and activities including an annual residential retreat for all EF academics[119]. Communities of Practice[120] (COPs) were also established to build EF networks and enhance the UNSW learning experience in topic areas such as *Student Wellbeing* and *Artificial Intelligence*.



connectivity with the wider UNSW academic community. As the EF cohort grew, so did efforts to integrate it in the wider UNSW community. Non-EF academics were encouraged to join COPs, and now comprise 44% of their membership. Programmes such as NEXUS[121] were also launched to help EF and non-EF academics share good educational practices and advance UNSW's strategic priorities in their departments.



connectivity with external educational communities. Building networks with, and advancing impact on, the global EF community was seen as a key mechanism to build the reputational capital of UNSW's EF academics and identify new educational ideas, funding sources, and partnerships. With major constraints on institutional budgets, UNSW's approach has been highly focused; this global network-building principally targeted the SoTL community, as noted below.

UNSW prioritises two key SoTL conferences – the global *International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning* (ISSOTL)[122] and the regional *Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia*[123] – to enhance the external impact, profile, and connectivity of its EF community. EF academics are offered structured training and mentorship to support abstract submissions to these conferences, along with post-conference support to maximise their contribution to career development. Grants are provided to all first-time conference attendees and all those with accepted abstracts. UNSW's EF cohort was noted to be a visible and cohesive community at these events, with a strong emphasis placed on peer support and brokering new partnerships outside the university. UNSW has also started to evaluate the impact of conference grants provided to EF academics, tracking the opportunities each grant creates for the individual in the years following their attendance; metrics include educational research partnerships, external grants success, leadership opportunities enabled, and the external referees secured.

In addition to these conference grants, UNSW supports a range of other network-building resources including *Visiting Teaching Fellowships* for EF academics to host a leading educator at the university.

11.2. **Fostering beneficial cross-institutional partnerships**

Interviewee feedback suggests that cross-institutional partnerships are playing an increasingly important role in driving and supporting changes to the reward of university teaching. A growing number of universities are making systemic changes as part of cross-institutional partnerships focused on collaborative transformation. Indeed, over half of interviewees from front-runner institutions noted the influence of external partnerships in raising ambitions, addressing shared challenges, celebrating successes, and keeping the academic community engaged throughout the often lengthy reform process. As one interviewee noted: "*I really don't believe we would have got there alone – we listened to each other, we help each other, and we move together*".

A small number of these collaborations are a response to 'top-down' mandated reform, such as the government's call[6] for all Malaysian universities to establish 'diversified' academic career pathways. Most, however, are informal coalitions, instigated 'bottom-up' from the academic community in like-minded universities, united by a shared agenda to improve the support and/or reward of university teaching.

The partnerships most frequently identified by interviewees as beneficial to their efforts to improve the reward of university teaching fell into one of three types:

- **national change coalitions:** often supported by national higher education professional bodies, these informal partnerships bring together most or all universities in a single country around a shared vision for change. Examples include: (i) the new national Danish framework[18] for university teaching, co-developed through *Universities Denmark*[29], which is being used as a springboard for national change (see Box 10); (ii) the national Swedish course[36] to train academics as external peer reviewers in university teaching, supported by the *Swedish Network for Educational Development in Higher Education*[124]; and (iii) the Dutch agreement[37] for systemic change to systems of university reward, supported by *Universities of the Netherlands*[125], as outlined in Box 14.
- **targeted reform partnerships:** national and global partnerships focused on key elements of the change process. Examples include coalitions focused on building communities and career development opportunities for education-focused academics (such as the *Advancement of Teaching-Focused Roles Interest Group*[126]), and those focused on improving how university teaching is evaluated (such as the *TEval* consortium[57] and related activities undertaken by the *Association of American Universities*[127]). Many of these partnerships appear to have grown out of a shared involvement with broader membership organisations such as *ISSOTL*[122] and *Advance HE*[33].
- **coalitions focused on rewarding university teaching:** a smaller group of national and global partnerships specifically focused on improving the reward of university teaching across the higher education sector. Examples include the *U21*[59] coalition (which developed the *U21 Teaching Standards Framework*[58]*)* and the *Advancing Teaching*[2] network.

Feedback suggests many of these coalitions have an influence that reaches far beyond the member institutions. It is also notable that many of the universities involved in these collaborations are based in Northern Europe, where a long-standing collectivist culture supports cross-institutional partnerships. Indeed, interviewee feedback pointed to several other national Nordic collaborations to improve university reward systems, such as the recent launch of a national *Teaching Academy* for all public universities in Iceland[128] and the development of the *Norwegian Career Assessment Matrix* (NOR-CAM)[129] which offers a new framework for academic reward and recognition.

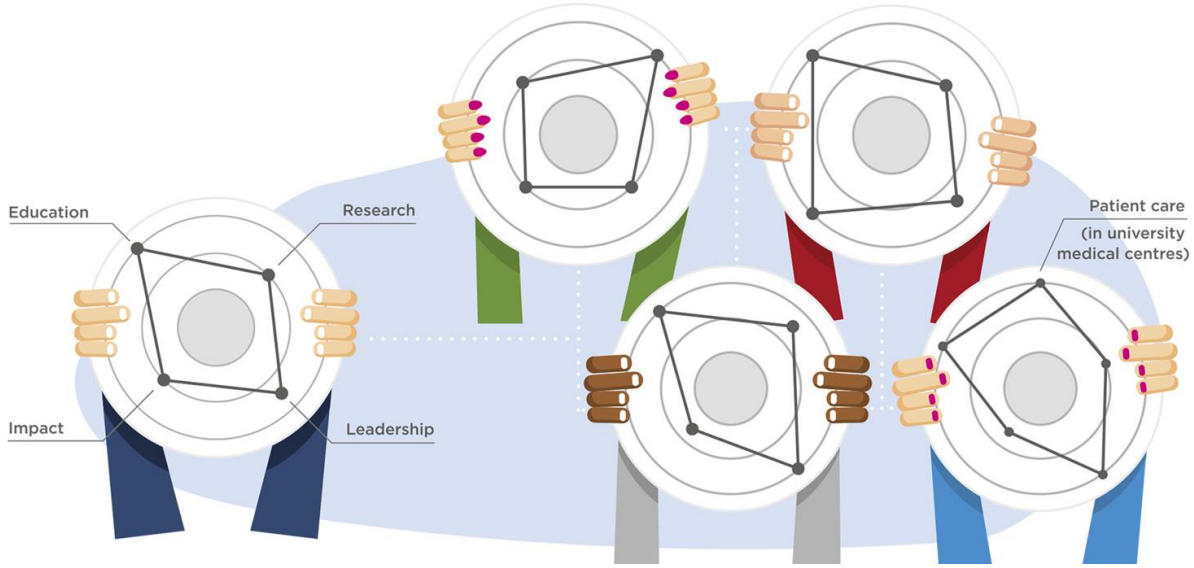
Box 14: **Recognition & Rewards, Netherlands**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **NATIONAL CHANGE COALITION**

In November 2019, a consortium of Dutch higher education associations and research funding agencies published a seminal position paper – *Room for Everyone's Talent: Towards a New Balance in the Recognition and Rewards of Academics*[37] – that called for root-and-branch changes in the recognition and reward of academics in universities and medical centres across the country. The position paper built on grassroots calls for change from the national academic community and was endorsed by the Rectors of all 14 Dutch research-intensive universities. Key targets for reform included: a shift away from quantitative, publication-based metrics to qualitative assessments of academic impact; diversifying career paths and offering greater flexibility to academics; a greater emphasis on collective rather than individual performance and culture; and greater promotion of *Open Science*[130] and societal contributions.

In response, each Dutch research-intensive university embarked on far-reaching reforms to the design of their academic career pathways and systems for evaluating and supporting academic progression. While guided by shared principles, these reforms have been adapted to suit the specific institutional contexts and cultures of each university. Institutional reform activities are supported by a national *Recognition & Rewards Programme*[131] and monitored through a cross-institutional survey launched in 2024[132]. Ongoing support is also provided through the *Netherlands Initiative for Education Research*[133] (NRO) which is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education. With an annual budget of €25m, many of the NRO's support systems directly address the priorities of Dutch universities as they strive to improve the quality, culture, and recognition of university teaching. Support includes grants from the *Comenius Programme*[66] to help academics drive evidence-led educational innovation.

In the five years since its launch, the reforms have already started to reshape the reward of university teaching across Dutch institutions, as highlighted throughout this report. However, these reforms build on a long-standing culture of collaboration and cross-institutional agreement that has worked to improve teaching and learning at Dutch universities over many years. For example, Dutch universities have established a system of mutual recognition for mandatory UTQ qualifications[134], and there is growing interest in extending this to STQs[135]. Cross-institutional collaboration is further evident in initiatives such as joint educational leadership programmes, including the partnership between Delft University of Technology, Erasmus University Rotterdam, and Leiden University[136]. The Dutch academic community also recently negotiated a Collective Labour Agreement, which includes a cap limiting the proportion of education-focused academics on temporary contracts to 13.5%[137]. These collective efforts have strengthened the foundations for ongoing reforms, ensuring the sustainable advancement of teaching and learning in Dutch universities.



Change leaders spoke at length about the far-reaching benefits of cross-institutional partnerships. In addition to offering academics and change leaders personal enrichment through communities of support and connectivity, they were noted to add wider value to the participating universities. Interviewees described how cross-institutional partnerships helped to build and sustain the momentum for change in three ways:

1. **establishing shared standards:** as noted in Box 1, many of the coalitions most frequently cited by interviewees are grounded in shared standards for university teaching, such as the *Teaching Indicators Framework*[58] developed by *U21*, the *Career Framework For University Teaching*[34] developed by *Advancing Teaching*, and the *PSF*[32] developed by *Advance HE.* Interviewees pointed to the benefits of such shared standards, including: a framework for progression whose efficacy has been demonstrated elsewhere; a shared language in university teaching across and between institutions; and standards that support the cross-institutional mobility of academics. Some interviewees – particularly those based in Australia and New Zealand – reported using the *Advance HE PSF* and its associated fellowships as an alternative to formal academic teaching qualifications. They also noted adopting the *PSF* criteria to structure progression pathways for education-focused career tracks.
2. **diffusion of ideas and innovative approaches:** exposure to new thinking and approaches was noted to be a catalyst for initiating discussions about how different models for rewarding university teaching could address shared challenges. The partnerships also facilitated the diffusion of ideas, which could then be advanced through more focused discussions between institutions. Examples include collaborations on educational leadership, with models from Utrecht University and UBC proving particularly influential worldwide (as noted in Chapter 10.4). Another example is the widespread diffusion of the *Pedagogical Academy* model, first developed at Lund University, as described in Box 15, which many interviewees noted to have influenced conversations and ideas within their universities. In many cases, these informal discussions between universities with shared priorities and challenges have evolved into committed partnerships to advance and validate these approaches.
3. **external validation:** partnerships enable universities to benchmark their systems, priorities and progress against peer institutions. For example, the Advance HE *PSF*[32] was noted to provide external validation of the quality and impact of the university teaching of academics against international standards and peer institutions, benefiting both the individual academic and their institution. Collaborations are also catalysing cross-institutional studies and surveys (described in Chapter 11.3) that help universities to benchmark their progress.

It should also be noted that some resistance to coordinated reform of university reward systems has emerged within the academic community, prompted by concerns that change could devalue and constrain academic careers. For example in the Netherlands, national changes[37] to how the quality and impact of university research are evaluated prompted an open letter[138] written by a group of senior Dutch academics (and which subsequently provoked a rebuttal[139] from some early career academics). Other concerns focused on potential unintended consequences of national changes to how university teaching is rewarded. For example, concerns were raised by Norwegian academics[140] that the government's call[141] for "*all universities and colleges [to] establish merit systems for higher education no later than spring 2019*" might restrict academic career progression and prioritise individual, rather than collective, contributions to university teaching.

Box 15: **Diffusion of the Pedagogical Merit Model**

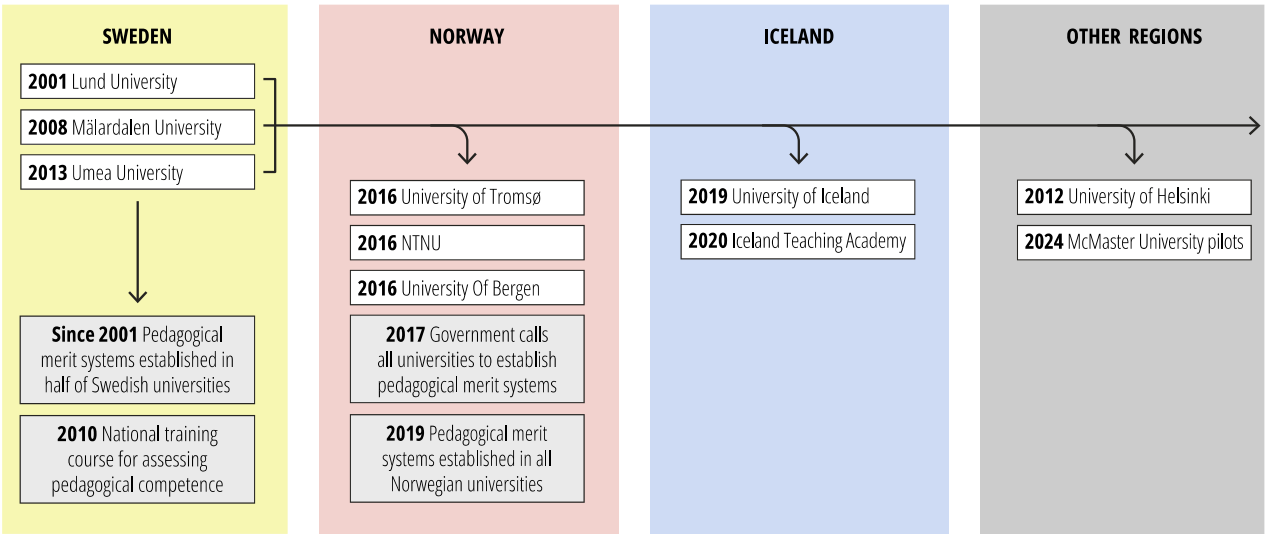
FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **DIFFUSION OF IDEAS AND APPROACHES**

The past 25 years have seen the growth of the *Pedagogical Merit* model across Nordic countries, with universities worldwide increasingly taking an interest in this approach. The first *Pedagogical Academy* was established in 2001 at Lund University[15]. In the 12 years that followed, two further Academies were launched in Sweden – at Mälardalen University[142] and at Umeå University[143] – which, together with LTH, would go on to become important sources of influence for the wider diffusion of the model.

The pioneers of these early Academies brought considerable expertise in educational research, such as in the relationship between academic microcultures and educational quality[144] and how pedagogical competence is defined and evaluated[30]. Their approach was grounded in this evidence-base. In 2010, they came together to establish a national course[36] to train academics as external referees for *Pedagogical Academy* applications and for university appointments and promotions nationwide. At the same time, this team secured national funding to disseminate the *Pedagogical Academy* model more widely. The resulting report produced[30] stimulated further institutional engagement and, by 2021, half of Swedish universities had adopted a *Pedagogical Academy* model through which over 1000 academics have been accredited as 'excellent teaching practitioners' to date[31].

As the influence of these Swedish developments grew, three Norwegian universities – NTNU[145], the University of Tromsø[146], and the University of Bergen[147] – launched pilot *Pedagogical Academies* in 2016. Like their Swedish counterparts, a major goal was to foster a more collegial and scholarly culture in university teaching. The following year, the Norwegian government released a White Paper[148] calling for the adoption of *Pedagogical Academy* systems across the country by 2019, citing LTH and the early adopters in Norway as exemplars. All Norwegian universities have since launched *Pedagogical Academies*, with many establishing internal training and support programmes for both candidates and assessors. At the same time, inspired by the developments in Sweden and Norway, the University of Iceland began exploring the *Pedagogical Academy* model. Soon after, the Icelandic Ministry funded the creation of a national *Teaching Academy*[149] for academics at all public Icelandic universities, with plans to expand to private universities in 2025.

The *Pedagogical Academy* model is now appearing more widely both across Nordic universities and further afield. While the approaches adopted by each university are all distinct, reflecting their cultures, context and priorities of the universities in which they are hosted, most share three crucial elements: (i) merited teachers receive a permanent salary increase; (ii) selection criteria focus on reflective, scholarly practice that develops over time and fosters collegial educational cultures and practices; and (iii) external experts provide independent assessments of the candidate's teaching portfolio.



11.3. **Tracking the impacts of change**

Delivering tangible and visible benefits is key to maintaining the momentum for changes in the reward of university teaching. Increasingly, early adopter institutions are starting to assess the impact of their reforms, focusing on how change affects institutional culture, the quality of university teaching, and academic career progression. Such evaluations can play a vital role in maintaining support for reforms by capturing benefits and identifying areas for improvement.

Interviewees consistently highlighted the quality of institutional evaluations at two universities:

- ongoing evaluations of the LTH *Pedagogical Academy*[15] at **Lund University** which uses data from the *Course Experience Questionnaire*[150], collected annually from students across the school since 2003, to demonstrate progressive improvements in teaching quality.
- a recent evaluation[151] of the quality and impact of the *Educational Leadership*[17] career pathway at **UBC**, first introduced in 2012, as described in Box 16.

As more universities collaborate to drive collective change, cross-institutional evaluations of impact are also becoming more common. These evaluations help universities track progress over time and benchmark against peer institutions. Examples repeatedly highlighted by interviewees included:

- the **Teaching Cultures Survey**[152], a cross-sectional survey capturing the perspectives and experiences of academics at universities engaged in change to the reward of university teaching. The survey includes 28 universities from 12 countries, with capture points in 2019, 2022 and 2025. Many participating universities, including the consortium of four Dutch technical universities[153], are using the survey findings to guide future priorities for change.
- ongoing efforts to track the growing impact of **Pedagogical Academies** across the Nordic region (see Chapter 8.3). This includes a study[31] highlighting how Swedish universities with Pedagogical Academies are reporting higher engagement in educational development and improvements in educational quality among their academics compared to peer institutions.

Across this chapter, three interrelated and reinforcing mechanisms have been identified to enable universities to drive and support positive change. Building a culture that values university teaching, fostering productive cross-institutional partnerships, and tracking the impacts of change all provide complementary approaches to enhance the reward of university teaching. As more universities engage in such reforms, further evidence is likely to emerge to demonstrate the impact on universities and their students. Such evidence can serve as an important mechanism to further sustain and strengthen global efforts to improve the reward of university teaching.

Box 16: **Evaluation of the Educational Leadership pathway, UBC, Canada**

FEATURE HIGHLIGHTED: **EVALUATING IMPACT OF CHANGES TO ACADEMIC CAREER PATHWAYS**

Established in 2012, the *Educational Leadership*[17] pathway at the UBC was designed to establish a high-status career track for education-focused academics with routes for progression full professorship and, thereby, to enhance UBC as a centre of excellence in university teaching. The pathway introduced new criteria for career advancement in university teaching, with a focus on developing and demonstrating educational leadership.

The community of *Educational Leadership* academics has grown rapidly, with 350 academics now appointed to this pathway. In 2023, an evaluation[151] of the track was undertaken to assess its impact and identify areas for further development. The evaluation included surveys, focus groups and interviews with members of the UBC academic community, alongside an analysis of the career trajectories of academics on the *Educational Leadership* pathway.

REPORT APPENDICES

Appendix A. Case studies included in report

Appendix B. Interview questions

Provided below are the core questions used to frame interviews during Phase 2 of the study. Where requested, interview questions were supplied in advance of the consultation and were supplied with contextual information about the study and its focus.

Context

The study is designed to capture and showcase highly-regarded and influential practices worldwide in how university teaching* is rewarded in academic careers. It considers both university reward systems and the institutional processes and cultures that support them, including activities in the following four areas:

1. **career frameworks:** the design and delivery of academic career pathways that offer flexible, robust and clearly-defined routes for advancement on the basis of university teaching;
2. **evaluation of educational achievement:** approaches used to evaluate or assess an academic's achievement in university teaching across a range of pathways and levels in the career ladder;
3. **support for educational progression:** institutional systems – such as annual performance reviews, grants to support educational innovation or educational development programmes – that can support an academic's development and advancement in university teaching;
4. **managing effective institutional change:** strategies adopted to overcome cultural and structural barriers to changing institutional reward systems and/or evaluating the impact of these reforms.

** the term **university teaching** is used to cover all activities relating to teaching and learning at universities, including curriculum development; teaching students; pedagogical research; and policy making.*

Questions that will be used to frame the informal interview

Practice at your institution: how university teaching is evaluated, supported and rewarded in academic careers at your institution/university:

1. What do you see as the major challenges facing the effective evaluation, support, and reward of university teaching at your institution?
2. In your view, which policies, activities, or practices at your university have been most effective in evaluating, supporting, and/or rewarding university teaching in academic careers?
3. Has your university recently implemented (or does it plan to implement) any changes in how university teaching is evaluated, supported, and/or rewarded in academic careers? If so, could you describe the focus and design of these changes?

Practices outside your institution: your perspectives on effective practices delivered elsewhere (in other universities or higher education systems) to evaluate, support and/or reward university teaching:

4. In your view, how has the recognition and reward of university teaching in academic careers changed across the higher education sector over the past decade?
5. How do you expect the reward of university teaching to change nationally and globally in the next decade?
6. What do you see as the major challenges to effectively evaluating, supporting, and rewarding university teaching across the sector?
7. Which universities have you taken inspiration from or consider to have taken a particularly effective approach to supporting, evaluating and/or rewarding teaching in academic careers?
8. Are there any other individuals you would recommend for consultation as part of this study?

Endnotes

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Further information on this project

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