



VISION ON EDUCATION



ROTTERDAM
UNIVERSITY

UNIVERSITY OF
APPLIED SCIENCES

Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences stands for education that is of high-quality, inclusive, and that prepares students for a changing job market and society. That leads to context-rich education in which education, professional practice and applied research are meshed.

ABOUT THE VISION

The educational vision of the Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences represents characteristics of our education in all study programmes such as Associate Bachelor, Bachelor, and Master, full-time and part-time. This vision has come to fruition based on input of internal and external stakeholders such as: students, lecturers, management, directors, the professional practice, researchers, and advisors. Their knowledge and experience has been supplemented by current insights from theory and research. This has resulted in the elements of our education with which we can fulfill the ambition of the school as is expressed in the Strategic Agenda.¹

The educational vision assigns a normative basis for our education. The 'what' and 'how' is left to professional capacity of the lecturer teams, considering their students, the professions they are educating toward, and the individual identity of the study programme. They can account for the choices that they have made, and consequent results in light of this vision by the University of Applied Science.

The vision in this document presumes a wider scope than one individual study programme, profession or discipline. To shape context-rich education it becomes necessary to look beyond the borders of certain disciplines, study programmes, and fields of knowledge. In this perspective the University of Applied Sciences offers our lecturers and students the maximum of opportunities to develop that wider perspective with all the variety of industries and connections to the metropolitan and international context.

GOAL OF OUR EDUCATION

All students will reach a higher level and will develop to become, skilled, reflective and enterprising professionals. This in turn means that our education includes the following:

- Educating for the job market, a profession, and resulting in a diploma (qualification)
- Development of norms and values and practices of the profession and society (socialisation)
- Stimulating the development of one's identity (subjectification)

¹ Our Agenda, Education in Rotterdam for the world of tomorrow. Strategic Agenda Rotterdam University of Applied Sciences, August 2016.

VISION ON LEARNING

We look at learning in three ways:

- **Learning from the past**
Firstly we think of learning as acquiring knowledge and understanding. It's about transferring, acquiring, and applying knowledge. In our education this is done actively. Focus is on the individual who possesses the knowledge. Knowledge is processed in the brains of individuals and produces logically, well-ordered, knowledge structures.
- **Participating in the present**
Secondly learning is participation. Learning is an interactive process of participation in varying context. Individuals become part of a professional group and learn to communicate and act according to the accepted norms. Knowledge is applicable and in context.
- **Creating of the future**
Finally we take a look at learning as creating knowledge, in which the focus is on the innovative aspects of learning and knowledge. Learning is the further development of knowledge within the context of a profession, and thus goes beyond acquiring existing knowledge, or using already existing practices. Creating knowledge takes place within social structures and processes of collaboration, supporting innovation and development of knowledge. The focus is on learning collectively versus learning individually.

These three ways of thinking complement each other and are used in combination when developing our education. We see them in the structure of our education. At the beginning of the programmes focus is on learning existing knowledge and acquiring skills. Further into the programme the focus shifts to participating in the professional practice and to the creation of knowledge.

WHOSE EDUCATION IS IT?

Students, lecturers, researchers, and professionals create our education together. They shape education, work and learn collectively, and are continually working toward improvement and renewal. The input is the commitment of all those involved, and the output is added value for everyone. Lecturer teams are in charge. At the basis is professional autonomy which supposes the willingness to be held accountable.

PEDAGOGICS AND DIDACTICS IN OUR EDUCATION

In our education we find a culture in which there is room for mistakes and room to learn from those mistakes. Characteristics are:

- *Inclusiveness* – Everyone feels welcome here regardless of cultural and socio-economic background, nature, age, talent, possibilities, etc. In our education we acknowledge the presence of differences and we try to use this diversity and apply it as a strength. These differences introduce other perspectives which will strengthen the inquisitive attitude and will help discourage unfounded assumptions and blind spots. Lecturers have high expectations of every student. They are also aware of judgement and prejudices, the mechanisms that result in unfair advantage, their own behaviour, and their frame of reference.
- *Differentiation* – In our pedagogical and didactic approach of students we consider various backgrounds, personal situation, ambitions, motivations, and talent of our students. Students follow a specific route. End qualifications are fixed, but the path may vary in form, content, and tempo. We guide students in their choices in a way that fits their talents and possibilities, and that challenges them to take matters into their own hands.
- *Connection* – Our education is organised on a small-scale. Meaning that whenever possible we work in small groups, mutual commitment is great, communication lines are short, and there is personal guidance and attention. Students, lecturers and those involved all know each other and are connected.
- *Energising interaction* – During dialogues lecturers, students, professionals and researchers are comfortable asking tough questions that prompt reflection and theoretical insight. Students receive structured and constructive feedback that will encourage further study and development.

WORK-STUDY ENVIRONMENT OF OUR EDUCATION

Our education, professional practice and applied research are all present in our work-study environment. Students, lecturers, researchers and professionals work and learn side by side on current problems that are important to the professional practice and to society. This occurs not only on-campus, but also off-campus as the courses and their lecturers are given in the actual work place. Professional practice participates fully in education via case study, internship, applied research, field labs, and living labs, et cetera. In this way we anticipate developments in the professional field and students instantly learn the dynamics of that field. Research Centres and Centres of Expertise play a crucial role in gathering knowledge on new developments in the professional practice, and in contributing to improvement and renewal of the professional practice.

THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF OUR EDUCATION

In our education students develop a solid foundation, learn how to participate in the professional world, solve issues, and develop their professional identity. These elements do not stand alone, but they are integrated and developed in relation to each other. Each part has its own function, and focus:

- *Basis of knowledge* – Students accumulate their knowledge, use it as a basis for their work and solving real-life problems in the work place. Compounding knowledge is meaningful to the student. The ‘body of knowledge & skills’ of the study programme continues to be current due to the commitment of researchers and the role of the professional practice in the work-study environment.
- *Conducting yourself in the professional practice* – Students learn how to conduct themselves professionally while working on all encompassing issues for the professional practice and for society. Because of this synergy, education is up-to-date and adaptive, which is necessary due to the fast-changing world. The ability to be inquisitive plays a crucial role in working methodically, and in improving professional conduct.
- *Professional identity* – Students develop more insight into who they are as a person in relation to their profession and environment. Based on their experiences in the field and their consequent reflections, students will form their professional identity. This gives them direction in making conscious decisions while on their career path at school working toward that career.
- *Qualifying assessment & continuous feedback focussed on development* – Assessment and feedback are an integral part of the curriculum elements described above. Moments of evaluation and feedback take place continually producing useful information for further study. Assessment is used as a learning tool to stimulate development. A comprehensive assessment programme is warranted.

STRUCTURE OF THE CURRICULUM

As the study programme progresses, elements of the education develop:

- From structured assignments of low complexity, to complex assignments lacking in structure;
- From much guidance provided by the school, to self-directing qualities;
- From passive learning using models, to using and developing knowledge and models;
- From developing information skills, to adding knowledge to the work or learning context;
- From study skills, to career-path development;

- From exploring a study, profession and identity, to presenting oneself as a young professional;
- From learning from the lecturer, to learning from the lecturer, and other professionals, and other students.

SOURCES

Internal sources:

- Opbrengsten van analyses, strategietafels en andere bijeenkomsten rond de Strategische Agenda
- Commissie Kuijpers. Verander SLC. Maak het nuttig, maak het persoonlijk! Juni 2015.
- Expertisegroep Aansluiting. Welke adviezen willen de adviseurs aansluiting vo/mbo de stuurgroep en programmacommissie Strategische Agenda geven en welke bijdrage kunnen zij leveren? 23 maart 2016
- Expertisegroep Honours. Kernwoorden voor HR-onderwijs 'fit for the future'. 15 maart 2016.
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