Network for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in research-intensive universities (NETL)

2017 Annual Gathering (1-2 June, 2017), Utrecht

Utrecht University hosted the fourteenth annual meeting of the Network. Ten of the 13 member institutions were able to participate.

It was an informative and inspirational meeting, that started with a buffet dinner at Jan van Tartwijk’s home. We had interesting informal conversations, that continued during the walk through Amelisweerd and the boat trip along the Kromme Rijn river. The exchange of ideas and experiences about strategic issues, current projects, and good practices in teaching and learning in our research-intensive universities, was felt as very useful.

The programme included the following topics.

***Campus updates.*** The aim of campus updates is to focus on important ongoing strategic issues that might be of relevance for all partners. The updates (10 minutes per institution) give the opportunity for informal conversation and participation by all.

The informal and confident nature of the meeting allowed us to talk for instance about the complexity and necessity of curriculum reform, and culture change processes. Delegates also shared experiences with development of new strategic plans and curriculum reform, with current projects around life long learning and MOOC development, and with professional development of academic staff.

***The Future of Higher Education***

A keynote was delivered by prof.dr. Bert van der Zwaan, rector magnificus at Utrecht University. We discussed global trends and developments in Higher Education around the world, about which he has written a book “Higher Education in 2040. A Global Approach” ([available as pdf](https://netl.sites.uu.nl/2017/03/27/book-online-available/)). To prepare for this future, reflection, creativity, life long learning and bridging the gap between universities and society, will become pivotal. Huang Hoon Chng (National University of Singapore) focused in her discussion on specific issues for research-intensive universities: to articulate the relevance of research-intensive institutions, to think about access for different societal groups, to engage the whole population in research, and also the effects of the volatility of politics. These topics were discussed further by the whole group.

***Other topics were:***

***Leading curriculum renewal***. Presenters Pip Pattison (Sydney) and Grahame Bilbow (Hong Kong) talked about the recent curriculum renewal projects in both their universities.

***Professional development and career progression in teaching****,* introduced by Manon Kluijtmans (Utrecht) and Huang Hoon Chng and Johan Geertsema (Singapore).

***Post graduate education***, introduced by Anders Sonesson (Lund) and Jon Turner (Edinburgh)

***At the end of the meeting***

We celebrated the progress made regarding the NETL book, which was *in press* at the time of the meeting. The title is: *Strengthening teaching and learning in research universities: Strategies and initiatives for institutional change;* it is edited by Bjørn Stensaker, Grahame Bilbow, Lori Breslow and Rob van der Vaart (available via the [publisher](http://www.springer.com/gp/book/9783319564982)).

We talked about extending the network with one or two members, although we said that we want to stay a small and informal network. Five interesting institutions were mentioned, and we agreed who of the current delegates will contact them.

A new website was designed, <https://netl.sites.uu.nl/>, which will be available for future use by the Network.

**The next meeting will be in Helsinki, from Wednesday evening 13 June to Friday afternoon 15 June 2018.**