STUDENT PATHS

Flexibilisation manifests itself in various dimensions, such as pace, time, place, content, and level. Each dimension entails its own set of challenges.
Currently, higher education is designed as a course pathway determined by the institution. With a more flexible educational system, this is no longer necessary. Flexible learning paths allow students to take control of their learning process. The difference between initial and post-initial education is blurred. Individual student paths no longer necessarily follow the course pathway of the institution or the major programme. Based on its own mission and vision, each institution determines the framework within which these individual paths can be defined and tailored.
This enables institutions to ensure the quality of their education and degrees.

OFFERING CHOICES

Every student is unique, and society increasingly needs professionals with their own strengths and qualifications. Lifelong learning is becoming the norm, and higher education institutions should respond to this by enabling lifelong learning and flexible education. By offering choices to make education more flexible, training programmes can be linked to the individual needs of the student. The students are given control and responsibility for their own development.

EFFECTS OF FLEXIBLE STUDENT PATHS

Over the next four years, the Flexibilisation Team will be working on the meaning and impact of making education more flexible. They will explore possibilities, challenges, and questions based on four student paths. Each student path brings its own challenges, as described below.

Student path At your own pace

What does it mean to complete your studies within the set time frame, and what are the criteria for good education if everyone studies at their own pace? Is the distinction between full-time and part-time programmes still relevant? Or should there be a sliding scale? What does 'at your own pace' mean with regard to the need for learning communities where learning takes place in a cooperative context?

Student path Off the beaten track

What are the restrictions on expanding the existing leeway in study programmes? How does an examination board ensure the quality of the diploma if a student defines all or a substantial part of their learning outside the boundaries of the study programme? How can the associated administrative activities acts be simplified?

Student path MyDiploma

If courses and extracurricular activities can be freely combined to obtain a diploma, what are the minimum requirements? How does an examination board ensure the quality of a diploma if there is no predefined study programme content? Is training still the guiding principle for the provision of education, or are there more effective ways to define it? What forms of substantive and process support are needed to help students put together a good training programme?

Student path Modular learning

If obtaining a diploma is no longer the goal of the learning process, education can be organised in smaller, independent units. This creates room for partnerships with professionals who are looking for continuing education in specific areas as part of lifelong learning. Can small, independent educational units or modules be effectively certified? Can these certificates be bundled to achieve a degree? Can knowledge and skills acquired elsewhere be recognised for a study programme?
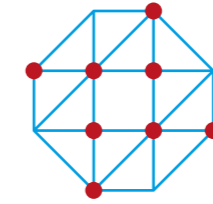
Acceleration plan
Educational innovation with ICT

GENERAL CONDITIONS

INFRASTRUCTURE

In a landscape of flexible education, an infrastructure is needed that makes education accessible to students and makes learning achievements accessible to society. The SURF projects that aim to achieve this – by means of a national open catalogue of educational modules, a student ID that can be broadly used, and badges as digital certificates – are therefore essential. Active linking with these ongoing initiatives is particularly valuable for the acceleration plan.

COLLABORATION

An ongoing dialogue and mutual understanding based on respect are essential for achieving this ambitious goal. Flexibilisation is a difficult issue and requires the active contribution of all parties concerned. Students, teachers, and supporters are invited to participate in this challenge. The student paths and personas in this brochure define the guidelines and help with conducting the right dialogue.

GRIT

Creativity, courage, and connections are important elements of this acceleration plan. Sometimes it takes more time and energy to get all players on the same wavelength, but it is important to take this time. In the end, achieving flexible education requires commitment, decisiveness and grit – at all levels within the institution. Flexibilisation does not happen by itself.

🖥 **surf.nl/en/acceleration-plan-for-educational-innovation-with-ict**

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May 2019

Making education more flexible

The Acceleration Plan for Educational Innovation with ICT is a four-year project of SURF, The Netherlands Association of Universities of Applied Sciences, and The Association of Universities in The Netherlands. The project aims to rapidly and reliably start using the opportunities available for higher education by combining initiatives, knowledge, and experience. The project is organised in eight thematic zones, each focusing on a different aspect of educational innovation. Flexibilisation of education is one of these thematic zones and focuses on making higher education more flexible to allow personal tailoring of education for students.

Vereniging Hogescholen   SURF   vsnu vereniging van universiteiten association of universities THE NETHERLANDS

1 Student paths
AT YOUR OWN PACE

The student is enrolled in a specifc programme at an institution and can complete the programme at their own pace. They can combine their studies with other significant activities, such as a job, a start-up, management tasks, or caring for family members.
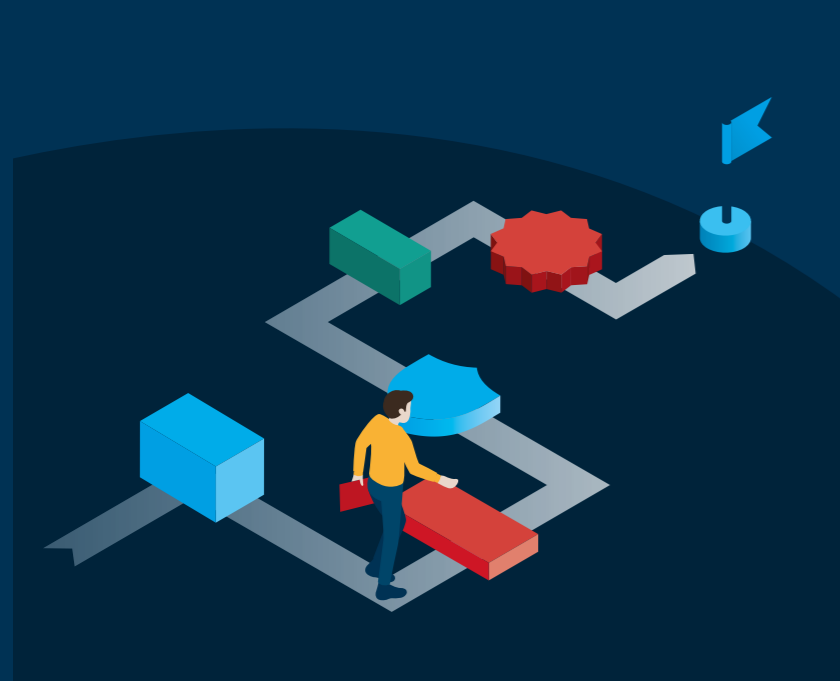

2 Student path
OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

This student path fosters mobility across educational and institutional boundaries to maximise the student's control over the progress of their study programme. Students can follow a (substantial) part of their programme in another course of study, faculty or institution without any practical obstacles. Mobility between universities of applied sciences and research universities can be an explicit part of this.

3 Student path
MYDIPLOMA

The 'MyDiploma' path dispenses with the idea of a predefined training programme. The form and content of the programme are determined by the student's needs, unlike the conventional approach. Working in short cycles, the student composes their own programme based on their ongoing personal and professional development, with guidance by the educational institution.

4 Student path
MODULAR LEARNING

The student signs up for modules instead of a full programme. These modules can also be part of a regular programme to ensure the necessary level. If a diploma is desired, this series of modules could for example be rounded off with an obligatory thesis module with predefined requirements.

EVERY STUDENT IS UNIQUE

1 AT YOUR OWN PACE

Bob is 22 years old and works part-time at a care facility. He is also enrolled in the Social Work bachelor's programme. He combines study, work and caregiving, which is quite a challenge. Together with his study advisor, Bob draws up a personal study plan every semester. Blended education allows Bob to do a large part of his studies independent of time and place. It takes him nearly six years to complete his studies while working and performing his duties as a caregiver, but he manages to pass all his exams successfully on the first try.

2 OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

Saskia is pursuing a bachelor's degree in biology, but she lacks practical experience and therefore enrols at a university of applied sciences for a number of professionally oriented modules in the field of communication. After completing her bachelor's degree, Saskia immediately starts working at a communication agency that carries out creative assignments for organisations involved in nature conservation and climate change.

3 MYDIPLOMA

Youssef is enrolled at a research university and has lots of ideas for a startup. With the assistance of a study coach, Youssef determines the next step in his development every three months. He takes courses at various universities. In addition, Youssef works for an incubator at the university and follows two MOOCs at a foreign institution. Youssef receives badges for a number of activities and ECs for his courses. His startup project is also rewarded with ECs in the form of a micro credentials. When he graduates, these badges and micro credentials are listed on his diploma supplement. He takes a total of four years to obtain his master's degree.
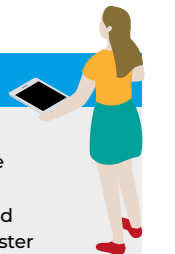
4 MODULAR LEARNING

Kathy works in Asia for an international food producer and would like to obtain a master's degree. She obtained her bachelor's degree in the United States and would like to work in a field that combines food technology and sustainable food production. Kathy is looking for master modules from Dutch universities. In three years' time, she obtains three master modules from different institutions, each worth 15 ECs. She then works on a capstone that combines the knowledge gained over the past three years. In this way Kathy is able to complete her preferred master's programme in her own time by combining relevant modules at the right institutions.

ITERATIVE DESIGN PROCESS

The student paths are developed in agile process and are therefore subject to change. The student paths described here are not mutually exclusive; combinations and variants are also possible. At present, implementation of these student paths is not yet adequately supported by legislation and regulations in all cases.