



## SHAPING 2030 - Way of Working Teams and Teamwork

This paper is inspired by the unpublished document on the new Way of Working, prepared for discussions about the UT strategy Shaping2030 (T. Bondarouk, D. van Dun, J. Eijkel, J. Franken, M. Letteboer, A. Mader, V. Veenhof, 2019).

*Narrative: "If you would have told me ten years ago that I would be part of a 'flexible support team', I would not have believed you. Most of my previous experiences with teamwork were not very good. I used to think that doing things on my own would lead to higher quality results while diminishing the number of meetings that hold me from my job. The past years, the UT has installed a way of working based on teamwork. I was skeptical at first. How is this 'way of working' really going to help us? But I learned from my colleagues that they were enthused by the fact that they were given true responsibility and autonomy to solve issues. Their manager helped them to co-develop ambitious but feasible goals, and supported the team where necessary. And their solutions were actually implemented! Thus, when my manager asked me to join a team tasked with seeking a solution for securing our Virtual Healthcare Research Lab, I took a chance. I got to know the other team members, colleagues throughout the university. We brought our expertise together and learned a great deal from one another. It was fun to be part of this entity. My manager truly handed over the responsibility and did not try to fit in his own ideas, as would have happened before. Now I know, - 'teaming' however really is a verb, and requires everyone involved to commit to the team goals and keep learning from providing constructive feedback to one another. Once these conditions are secured, it is exciting and invigorating to work in a multidisciplinary team where people truly appreciate your skills and knowledge."*

[UT Employee, August 2029]

## WHAT CONSTITUTES TEAMWORK IN UT'S 2030 WORKPLACE?

Teams is an old, a seemingly known phenomenon. We are used to work in teams, but not all teams we have experienced in the past functioned well. Why to pick up “teams” in our UT Shaping 2030 strategy if we all know about it? Well, one thing is to create a team, but quite another – to create teamwork. Just as it is one thing to join a team, but quite another – to perform as a team member, or even to lead a team.

Put it simply, a team is a group of people working together on a shared goal. In the university practice, we see teams as examples of unity, of enthusiasm for common interests and responsibilities to make societal impact through teaching and research. We see teams as open mini-networks that connect to larger networks for the benefits of every individual and the university as a whole. The legacy of teams is embedded in their duality: individuals join teams to share competences and learn from others, but the utmost result of good teamwork is the flourishing individual, who gets his/her own wings to soar on the team grounds. The flat structure of teams will naturally put People at the heart of our UT universe.

We see several reasons why teamwork at UT is important now. It creates synergy, where the sum is greater than the parts. In these times when complex societal challenges require out-of-the-box approaches, multidisciplinary teams are most fitting to develop innovative research and teaching programs. Moreover, as academic narratives and experience are gaining a stronger impact in securing research grants than purely research bibliometrics, teamwork will offer all of us to flourish at our own pace and within our interests. Teamwork promotes flatter and more value-adding structures, with less hierarchy. It enables flexibility and responsiveness, especially the ability to respond to change. Teamwork promotes the sense of achievement, equity, and a motivated workplace. Finally, teamwork safeguards fair distribution of workload.

But, how will we together make teams work? Teamwork requires cement which keeps a team together but makes them free: a bond that promotes strength, reliability, psychological safety, trust and support. Teamwork is also oil that makes the team work. It smoothes movements towards targets, helps to overcome obstacles, and enables every member to grow. To achieve such a state, supportive supervisors must give teams clear directions, means to excel and to engage in regular reciprocal feedback; autonomy, and a strong team composition. This means that supervisors play an important role in creating conditions for excellent teamwork that helps the individual and the UT thrive at the same time.

Given that there are different types of teams that UT leaders must enable, this requires them to develop flexibility in a leadership style to shift the focus according to the situation. In the 2030 workplace we see four types of teams that each have their own goals and composition:

- Homebased academic teams (e.g., research groups)
- Flexible academic teams (e.g., teaching module teams, research consortia)
- Flexible support teams (e.g., project teams)
- Homebased support teams (e.g., staff departments)

“Homebased” means that those teams are part of the more permanent UT organizational structure. “Flexible” means that team members can come from a wide range of departments and are typically together for a given period of time. Still, regardless of the different focus of each team, any team requires good teamwork and the required supportive conditions as described above. This is what we want to enable in UT’s 2030 workplace.



**SO, HOW DO WE GET THERE?**

Team autonomy often fails because we fall back into our old habit of controlling (and not trusting the process and outcome). The first step is to better understand what the reason is for this control that keeps teams from truly taking up their own responsibility. We also suggest to define UT principles of autonomy and how this relates to the current move towards a cluster structure that takes away control and autonomy from teams. The third step is that managers discuss, with each team, their goals and developmental path, and then provide the means to set this development in motion.

Setting overall direction				
Designing the team and its organizational context	Management Responsibility			
Monitoring and managing work process and progress		Team's Own Responsibility		
Executing the team task				
	Manager-led teams	Self-Managing teams	Self-Designing teams	Self-Governing teams



## SHAPING 2030 - Way of Working Leadership

*Narrative: "You know what? I feel so empowered right now! This is such a different experience compared to how I felt at my previous university. Last week I had a meeting with my direct supervisor. Even though I was a bit afraid to mention this at first given my previous experiences, I was able to share my concerns regarding a project team I joined a few months ago. I felt that my contribution to this team was not value-adding any longer as the team was effectively meeting its goals. Meanwhile, I also submitted a new research grant proposal, and since I am in the final round, I am currently fully absorbed with preparing for the interview. I was therefore ready to exit the project team and I wanted to discuss with my supervisor how I could go about this most effectively. Something interesting happened during the conversation with my supervisor, however. My supervisor started to ask a lot of questions, challenging my assumptions. This really got me thinking. She saw I was having a hard time on this as I feel committed to the project team, but at the same time struggled with juggling the balls. She therefore shared a personal story about how she had tackled such a tough issue before and what she had learnt from that experience. This really helped me put things in perspective. I feel so relieved as I now know what to do. I am very proud to be part of this organization!"*

*[UT Employee, September 2029]*

### WHAT CONSTITUTES LEADERSHIP IN UT'S 2030 WORKPLACE?

People in formal leadership positions (e.g., managers) are instrumental to *ensuring that individuals and networks at UT can excel*. Given that our 2030 workplace has a dynamic atmosphere and constitutes a variety of forms of collaboration/teams, leaders must be able to flexibly adjust to different people and work settings. We envision that our 2030 leaders serve their people by adopting both a transformational and instrumental leadership style.

Transformational means that leaders:

- openly share and (self-)reflect upon their vision, norms, values and behaviours;
  - provide inspirational motivation;
  - intellectually stimulate/challenge people; and
  - show empathy towards others.
- Leaders are also instrumental to achieving their people's goals, meaning that they:
- Collaboratively formulate and execute a team strategy
  - Provide the means to people in order to achieve the goals
  - Help people to monitor their own processes and outcomes
  - Correct if necessary
  - Help people grow/excel by providing feedback

At the same time, we also envision to ignite any *employee's personal leadership*. This personal leadership constitutes being proactive, taking initiatives, taking responsibility, effectively collaborating, and regular self-reflection on own role, norms, values and behaviours for continuous improvement. In a "people first" university, individual employees thus adopt leader-type behaviours, such as the ones mentioned above. Together we can make a difference and create excellent research, teaching and societal impact.

